THE MODERN READER'S BIBLE

THE PROVERBS

The M Co.

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To Ruth
With much love
Mother

Sept 1949

The Modern Reader's Bible

Wisdom Series

The Proverbs

The MM Co.

THE MODERN READER'S BIBLE

A SERIES OF WORKS FROM THE SACRED SCRIPTURES PRESENTED IN MODERN LITERARY FORM

THE PROVERBS

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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Introduction

In the wide range of books described by the collective title 'The Bible' a department that stands out separate from all the rest is Wisdom Literature. Side by side with prophets defending the theocracy and singers taking their inspiration from Temple service, with historians compiling annals of kings and scribes expounding the law, there was a class of Wise Men, who had habits of thought and forms of literature peculiar to themselves. Prophecy has much in common with the lyric psalms; prophecy again overlaps with history, and the line between historic and epic narrative is difficult to draw. But every reader feels how the proverbs of practical life differ from prophetic denunciations of sin, and how widely apart are the lyrics of worship and lyric celebrations of wisdom. Yet this is a distinctness in which there is no clashing: the wise have reached the same conclusions as the prophets and psalmists, only they have reached them by a different route. It is true that the name of Israel is found in only one of the books of wisdom, and only two give any recognition to

the chosen people; there is not a hint in these books of Messianic hopes, and in only one place is there a reference to Temple service; there is little said even of a personal God. The wise have, not inappropriately, been called humanists; but it would be a great mistake to describe their works as secular. The whole is pervaded by a spirit of devoutness; and if there is little discussion of God it is plainly because the idea of God is so entirely taken for granted.

The principle underlying Wisdom literature and giving it its unity may be described by the single word Observation. The prophet rests his message on an immediate Divine revelation: the wise men only claim to have observed life. Modern Science is not more faithful to its root idea of examining details and grouping results than is the wisdom of the Bible to its principle of analytic observation. This same idea of observation gives us a key for determining the relation of the books of wisdom to one another. The earlier works, *Proverbs* and *Ecclesiasticus*, give us only Isolated Observations of life; these are reflected in brief proverbs, or in literary forms but little removed from proverbs, and each is entirely distinct and complete in itself. The further notion of the connectedness of all things is not ignored in these earlier books, but is looked upon as no subject for reflective analysis; the wise men approach the universe as a whole with feelings only of adoration, and the philosopher becomes a poet singing of

this whole as 'Wisdom.' *Ecclesiastes* marks the point where, for the first time, reflective analysis has been turned upon the sum of things: the sudden responsibility becomes too great, and philosophy breaks down in despair. The word 'wisdom' now becomes confined for the most part to lesser achievements, or to the observing faculty; the universal is no longer a unity that can be adored, but a broken 'All things,' the attempt to understand which is 'vanity.' There is an advance from this position in the latest of the books of wisdom, the apocryphal *Wisdom of Solomon*. Here philosophy recovers its tone of rapture; the recovery is made, not by returning to the restricted area of observation, but by still further enlarging it. The Preacher had considered only this life; his successor recognizes a life beyond the grave, and in immortality finds a solution of present mysteries. Whereas the Preacher had confined himself to the present, the new wisdom adds the past of history, and presents Wisdom as Providence. And a single passage — where however the topic is only raised, and not followed into detail — shows that this close of Wisdom literature extends its observation even from human life to external nature. Thus these four — *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *Ecclesiastes* and *Wisdom of Solomon* — make a distinct progression of thought. And somewhere in this line of thought — it is needless to discuss exactly where — comes the remaining work of Wisdom literature, the *Book of Job*. Here again it is the universe as a whole which is

under consideration, or at least, its leading problem, the Mystery of Evil. And here not one but several attitudes of mind in reference to this central problem are represented, and embodied in different dramatic characters, while their discussion of the mystery undergoes the development that belongs to dramatic plot.

These Books of Wisdom make up the present series. 'The Modern Reader's Bible' does not touch matters of devotion or theology. Its purpose is to put forward biblical works as portions of World Literature, with an interest of their own for every variety of reader. But if they are to be so appreciated, it is necessary that they should be stripped of the mediæval and anti-literary form in which our current Bibles allow them to be obscured; more particularly of the pointless divisions into chapters, and monotonous numbering of verses, under which all literary structure lies buried. Nor does this series profess to deal with questions of historic criticism which are so rife at the present time. From their own point of view these questions are of high consequence. But to literature considered only as literature it is the opinion of the present editor that the importance of dates and historic setting has been immensely over-estimated, while considerations of authorship have more often proved a disturbance than a help. It is the more transient productions of literature that stand in need of such adventitious interest; the world's masterpieces, while of course they are capable of

additional illumination from every source, yet if left to themselves appeal to every people and every age. And such considerations apply with special force to the works contemplated in such a series as this; works in the historic discussion of which scholarship of equal eminence can be cited as pronouncing with equal positiveness on opposite sides of irreconcilable alternatives; while merely to state accurately the position of authorities makes a bulk of discussion sufficient to crowd out the thing discussed.

The Proverbs, which is the subject of the present volume, is a Miscellany of Wisdom in five books. Four of these are various collections of the isolated proverbs and sayings; the first book contains Poems on Wisdom in general. It may be well for the reader to know beforehand what is the matter and form of the literature he is to encounter.

To speak first of the proverbs themselves. Their fundamental topic is the world controversy between good and evil, wisdom and folly; both the antagonism itself and the judgment that is to decide between them. This judgment is not that which the prophets sometimes paint — a great Day of the Lord in which the whole earth is doomed, but a continual judgment, going on at all periods and in every individual life, by which the evil are constrained to bow before the good. Even the righteous are to be recompensed in the earth: how much more the

wicked and the sinner. As certainly as the Lord hath made everything for its own end, so certainly the wicked have been made for the day of evil. Doubts on the subject of this unerring judgment, such as dominate *Job* and *Ecclesiastes*, and disturb even the faith of Asaph, appear only in the faintest manner in this work, in the form of a few precepts against the envying of sinners. So pronounced is the victory of good in early proverbs that they have been called utilitarian. Certainly their language can be read in a utilitarian sense, but I doubt if this expresses their spirit; they are philosophical, not protreptical, and their purpose is not to bribe with offers of advantage, but to exclaim against the folly of thinking that there could be any path towards advantage except through right doing.

With this thought of the struggle between good and evil for the foundation of their creed, it is natural that the wise should give prominence to the topic of reproofs and chastening: the wise reproof upon the obedient ear like an earring of gold, the chastening a child with a rod to save him from Sheol, the faithful wounds of a friend contrasting with the profuse kisses of an enemy. Similarly, righteousness and success being inseparable, another prominent topic becomes the virtues that make for success and the vices that hinder it. Such vices the proverbs display as the slack hand, or the lack of enterprise that thinks of the clean crib instead of the increase which the strength of oxen will bring, or the talk of the lips leading

to penury, or the borrowing that brings with it slavery to the lender. But the chief scorn of the wise men is reserved for the sluggard: who roasteth not the food he took in hunting, who burieth his hand in the dish and will not so much as bring it to his mouth; his way is a perpetual hedge of thorns while other men are walking in a high way; as a son he is found sleeping in harvest time, as a messenger he is vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes of those who have sent him; at every call to action there seems a lion in the streets; with the mechanical motion of a swinging door he turns about on his bed, craving a little more slumber, until his drowsiness brings him to rags, or poverty springs upon him like an armed robber. And all the while he is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

The proverbs treat conduct in general, denouncing chiefly such evils as belong to a simple state of society: the dishonesty of the false balance and divers weights, revenge and hasty strife, gluttony and intemperance in wine. There is a hint of conflict between religion and morality in the precept against vowing rashly and afterwards making enquiry. The New Testament command to love an enemy is taken from the *Book of Proverbs*, though the Sermon on the Mount associates it with a higher motive. It is not surprising that in the sayings of the wise a special prominence should be given to the wisdom of the lips. He kisseth the lips, they say, that

giveth a right answer; a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in baskets of silver; not only does a soft answer turn away wrath, but a soft tongue breaketh the bone; the plans of the heart may belong to the individual man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.

Perhaps the proverbs are most characteristic when they turn upon the varying aspects of social life. Cameo pictures of social types abound. There is the prating fool, winking with his eye; the practical joker, as dangerous as a madman casting firebrands about; the talebearer, and the man who 'harps upon a matter,' separating chief friends; the whisperer whose words are like dainty morsels going down into the innermost parts of the belly; the backbiting tongue, drawing gloomy looks all around as surely as the north wind brings rain; the false boaster, compared to wind and clouds without rain; the haste to be rich; the liberal man that scattereth and yet increaseth, while others are withholding only to come to want; the speculator holding back his corn amid the curses of the people; the man of wandering life, like a restless bird; the unsocial man that separateth himself, foregoing wisdom for the sake of his own private desire; the cheerfulness that is a continual feast. The times of the wise men seem to have been acquainted with genteel poverty:

> Better is he that is lightly esteemed, and hath a servant,
> Than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

Nor were they too primitive to exhibit hollow social observances:

> Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye,
> Neither desire thou his dainties:
> For as one that reckoneth within himself, so is he:
> Eat and drink, saith he to thee;
> But his heart is not with thee.
> The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up,
> And lose thy sweet words.

Some of these social sayings rest upon the curious observation of what Ben Jonson would have called humours: the humour of the buyer, saying, It is naught, and when he is gone away, boasting; the humour of the mendicant, whose fellows give him a wide berth —

> — his friends go far from him!
> He pursueth them with words, but they are gone.

Of the same sort is the delightful picture of the parvenu at the great man's table, distracted between the dainties and awe at the presence: he is advised to keep a knife to his hungry throat. Most unexpected of all is the proverb of the inopportune man that "blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning:" but his blessing counts for a curse!

It is not only social types that thus appear in the sayings of the wise: social questions have their place. Proverbs are devoted to the relations of servant and master, wife and

husband, parents and children. And there is the perpetual question of rich and poor. The saying that the appetite of the labouring man laboureth for him might have served Aristophanes as text for the discourse of Poverty in his *Plutus*. The wise view the rich and poor mingling in the incidents of life, and proclaim that the same Lord is maker of all. They point out that there are some compensations even for poverty:

> The ransom of a man's life is his riches:
> But the poor heareth no threatening.

Robbery of the poor they denounce as a reproach to the common Maker of all; and their invectives against the various forms of oppression go back to the 'removing of landmarks' which may be regarded as the first step in the evolution of pauperism.

Individual experience also finds proverbs to reflect it: feebleness fainting in the day of adversity; satiety loathing the honeycomb; the sick disappointment of the hope deferred; the heart bowed with care, and gladdened by a single good word; the tinge of sorrow that is in laughter itself; the transitoriness of riches that make to themselves wings; misplaced confidence, jarring like a broken tooth or a foot out of joint; songs grating upon a heavy heart, and good news from a far country as refreshing as water to the thirsty. The proverb lore of experience may be con-

sidered to find its climax in Agur's aspiration after a life of golden mediocrity — neither poverty nor riches, but just food convenient for him.

What the proverbs omit is not less striking than the matter they contain. Two of the leading interests of our modern life can scarcely be said to have any place in early Wisdom literature — politics and religion. There are sayings which mention the king; but the king appears only vaguely as the embodiment of authority, and 'bad kings' as authority perverted. The king's wrath is as the roaring of the lion, his favour is as dew upon the grass; his glory is in the multitude of his people; his office is the winnowing out of sinners. A nearer approach to political ideas is in the single proverb which warns against men given to change. In the same way the Lord appears in this literature as the still higher authority and ultimate sanction; one saying makes a link between the human and divine authority by speaking of the king's heart as in the hands of the Lord, turned like watercourses wheresoever he wills. The proverbs love to dwell on the omniscience of Deity: his eyes are in every place keeping watch over evil and good. Where other powers fail, the ultimate authority still has place: such seems to be the thought of the saying which recognises the Lord as the disposer of the lot that is cast into the lap. There is however one varying note in *Proverbs* on this supreme topic. The simple sonnet of Agur on the Unsearchableness of God is the

first hint of that weary scepticism that stands fully revealed in *Ecclesiastes*.

I have been speaking of the topics of proverbs; it may be asked, what are the methods by which these topics are treated? Without attempting minute analysis I may remark that three characteristics of gnomic method stand out. Antithesis is the very life blood of the proverb: antithesis, in the form of adversative or other contrast, belongs to the vast majority of them.

> Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it:
> But the correction of fools is their folly.
>
> Children's children are the crown of old men;
> And the glory of children are their fathers.

Next in importance to antithesis, comparison is a mode of emphasis in proverbial sayings.

> A rebuke entereth deeper into one that hath understanding
> Than an hundred stripes into a fool.
>
> Wrath is cruel,
> And anger is outrageous:
> But who is able to stand before jealousy?

Such comparison reaches its fullest form in the enumerations of the Number Sonnets.

For three things the earth doth tremble,
And for four, which it cannot bear:
For a servant when he is king;
And a fool when he is filled with meat;
For an odious woman when she is married;
And an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

A third mode of treatment found in the proverbs *is* the kind of comparison called Imagery. Very striking images are employed by the wise men, especially in the fourth book of *Proverbs*. Such is the simile of the will o' the wisp:

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue
Is a vapour driven to and fro;
They that seek them seek death.

Three striking similes are massed together in a single saying, where the contentious woman is compared to continual dropping in a very rainy day; restraining her is like holding the wind, using force is like fighting slippery oil.

The reader of *Proverbs* must be on his guard against a first impression of commonplaceness. Proverbs have a prerogative to be commonplace; their mission is to voice the most widely diffused experience. And there is no literary function higher than that of giving point to what is ordinary, and rescuing a truth from the obscurity of obviousness. No impression is left on the mind by the dry statement that the behaviour of a pair of lovers is

irreducible to principle. But Agur can strike a spark when he makes this topic into a number sonnet:

> There be three things which are too wonderful for me,
> Yea, four which I know not:
> The way of an eagle in the air;
> The way of a serpent upon a rock;
> The way of a ship in the midst of the sea;
> And the way of a man with a maid.

It must be remembered, moreover, that proverbs suffer more than any other kind of literature by being read in collections. Most readers have grown weary even of excellent lyric poems when they have tried to read through a disconnected series. But Wisdom literature contains the briefest of all literary compositions, and three hundred and seventy-five of these, wholly unconnected, are massed together in a single book of *The Proverbs*. Many of the sayings will justify themselves at once; for others the reader must be content to wait. It may well happen that proverbs which seemed the coldest in the mere reading may glow with wisdom if the reader himself happens to pass into the experience they describe. No special information is given by the familiar saying that the heart knoweth its own bitterness. But those who have had to suffer some pang of disaster have realised how this and other proverbs attain the very perfection of adequacy.

Introduction

We seem to pass into a different region of literature when we turn from the collections of proverbs to the introductory book of Poems on Wisdom as a whole. The word wisdom is associated with other names — Knowledge, Discretion, Understanding, Discernment: the individual words are not to be pressed, either in the original language or in any other, but the idea is a profusion of synonyms intended to take in all excellence. When to these synonyms is added 'Instruction' and 'Law,' the man of wisdom and the scribe join hands. To such Wisdom are opposed special errors — sluggishness, the sowing of discord — or, in general terms, scorners and men of violence, as blind to their inevitable doom as the silly bird in whose very eyes the fowler may safely spread his net. Or the foes of Wisdom are the simple; or again the 'perverse' and 'froward' — terms suggesting those who do not yield to temptation, but go to meet it: in Southey's phrase, they tempt Hell to tempt them.

The Wisdom celebrated is a thing of character; but of character viewed as a whole. It is an air or presence, that hangs about a man like a chaplet of grace on his head or chains about his neck. Sought at first with strain and effort — with searching as for hid treasures, with watching daily at gates and waiting at the posts of doors, with the pain of Divine chastening — Wisdom becomes at last a heart possession, restraining the mouth, directing the eyes, establishing the feet, watching over the sleeper, talking with him when

he wakes: by multiplied expressions like these the poets of Wisdom strive to express the overflowing of vigorous consciousness, as when an epic hero is made to converse with his 'dear heart.' Character passes into action, and Wisdom appears as a 'way' and a 'path': a path of light growing from dawn into full day, in contrast with another path that leads down into darkness and stumbling. And in this connection of thought a single poem identifies Wisdom with a mocking retribution, such as a Greek poet would call 'Nemesis,' which the Hebrew poet, by an interlocking of metaphors, describes as a man's 'eating of the fruit of his way.' Viewed from the past, Wisdom is the 'principal thing' which has come down by tradition from instructing father to son that becomes instructor in his turn; viewed from yet another standpoint, Wisdom is the grand bargain of life, whose merchandise is better than merchandise of silver, and her gain than gold and rubies.

But Wisdom can rise higher still in the scale of personality. The same impulse which leads a sailor lad to speak of his ship as 'she,' or a poet to deify his inspiration as a Muse, leads the wise men to clothe their theme with a feminine personality. Wisdom is a sister, Understanding a kinswoman; the final poem of the book paints Wisdom as the universal hostess, with her house of seven pillars and her maidens bidding to a rich feast. But the great monologue which is the crown of the Wisdom poems contains another personification, as bold as it is brilliant.

The poet throws out his light by dark shading, and prepares the way by presenting another personality — the 'Strange Woman,' who haunts the whole of Wisdom literature. Her tempting enticements are elaborated in all their details, and the simple victim is pictured as following her, heedless as the ox going to the slaughter, helpless as the fettered prisoner carried to the correction of fools. There is a momentary lifting of a veil to give a glimpse of the house as the way down to the abyss, and the victims as a mighty host in the chambers of death: and then, with a startling turn of the imagery, the poet presents Wisdom as the temptress to good.

Doth not Wisdom cry?

From the high places and every point of vantage are heard her pleadings with the simple. She enumerates her charms: and at once the poem begins a chain of ascending climaxes. First, all the desirable things of mankind appear as part of Wisdom: subtilty and discretion, justice and strong rule, righteousness and true wealth. Then a further climax traverses the whole gulf between subjective and objective, and Wisdom is identified with Beauty, — not with any partial or transient beauty, but with the whole creative design of the universe, in which Wisdom assisted as a master workman. Even a higher climax still is found when Wisdom appears as the delight in all existence, such as crowns moments of rare consciousness

when the individual realises his oneness with the whole. The cosmogonist of *Genesis*, writing prose, represents God viewing his finished creation: "and, behold, it was very good." It is a poetic intensification of the same thought which here makes the beauty of creative design pass over into a joy of Deity for ever, and Wisdom is seen as his daily delight:

> Sporting always before him;
> Sporting in his habitable globe.

A few words will be sufficient to describe the literary forms which are to be met with in the Books of Proverbs. The most elementary is the Unit Proverb: a couplet — rarely a triplet — of verse, which is in the strictest sense an 'aphorism': bounded by its own horizon, without any connection with anything else. There are in *Proverbs* a few Proverb Clusters, where several independent sayings are gathered about a common theme. Next in order comes the Epigram. Classical epigrams do not, like those of modern literature, imply wit; the suggestion of the term is of smoothness and polish in connection with a poem at once brief and complete in its thought. In application to Wisdom literature I use the term Epigram in a very definite sense: as a unit proverb organically expanded. That is to say, in every epigram two lines (not necessarily consecutive) make a unit proverb, which is the germ of the whole.

Weary not thyself to be rich;
Cease from thine own wisdom.
Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?
For riches certainly make themselves wings,
Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven.

It is clear that the two lines which stand out on the left make a proverb complete in itself, and also that the remaining lines are expansions of the idea of this proverb. This plan of printing epigrams will be uniformly followed in these volumes.

In the opening book, and occasionally in the other books, we have Wisdom Sonnets. The neglect of Comparative Literature, and the tendency to study the literature of each nation by itself, has led to a narrowed conception of the Sonnet, from the circumstance that English sonnets and their Italian models consist of fourteen lines each. But there is no virtue in the number fourteen; and the true *differentia* of the Sonnet is the moulding of thought to special form. It is an accident that the Italian and English languages employ a single pattern; there is no departure from the sonnet spirit if a multiplicity of patterns be adopted, provided there is felt the cutting of the thought according to the form. In the Number Sonnets, more than one example of which has been already cited (pages xvii, xviii), the opening lines announce a scheme, "There are three . . . yea, four . . . ," to which the rest conforms. More important in Wisdom

literature are the Free Sonnets, in which the moulding is to nothing more restricted than 'high parallelism,' that is, not the parallelism binding successive lines into a stanza, but the bond which may correlate the most distant portions of a poem in a single scheme. The reader interested in technicalities will find a complete account of the structure of Wisdom poetry at the commencement of the notes to this volume. But without going into technicalities the sensitive reader can appreciate in these sonnets, when properly printed, their harmonies of form: sequences of parallelism repeating themselves or inverted, crossing or swinging like a pendulum, augmenting or varied in the freest manner yet without the rhythmic step being lost. The versification of Wisdom literature is to the versification of the Psalms what the music of Handel and Bach is to the music of Beethoven; and perhaps no name but that of Bach will adequately suggest the delight in formal bonds elastic enough to admit the deepest thought which makes the technical beauty of the Biblical Sonnet.

* * *

The text used throughout the Series is that of the Revised Version, for the use of which acknowledgment is due to the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge. The alternative marginal readings are often adopted.

The Proverbs of Solomon

The Son of David, King of Israel

To know Wisdom and Instruction:
To discern the Words of Understanding:
To receive instruction in Wise Dealing:
In Righteousness and Judgement and Equity:
To give Subtilty to the Simple:
To the Young Man Knowledge and Discretion:
That the Wise Man may hear and increase in Learning:
And that the Man of Understanding may attain
unto Sound Counsels:
To understand a Proverb and a Figure:
The Words of the Wise:
And their Dark Sayings.

The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Knowledge:
But the Foolish despise Wisdom and Instruction.

THE PROVERBS

A MISCELLANY OF WISDOM

IN FIVE BOOKS

BOOK I

SONNETS ON WISDOM

i

An Epigram

My son, hear the instruction of thy father,
And forsake not the law of thy mother:
For they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head,
And chains about thy neck.

ii

The Company of Sinners

A Sonnet

My son, if sinners entice thee,
Consent thou not.

If they say, Come with us,
Let us lay wait for blood,
Let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause;
Let us swallow them up alive as Sheol,
And whole, as those that go down into the pit;

We shall find all precious substance,
We shall fill our houses with spoil;
Thou shalt cast thy lot among us;
We will all have one purse:
My son, walk not thou in the way with them;
Refrain thy foot from their path:
For their feet run to evil,
And they make haste to shed blood.
For in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird:
And these lay wait for their own blood,
They lurk privily for their own lives.
So are the ways of every one that is greedy of gain;
It taketh away the life of the owners thereof.

iii

Wisdom's Cry of Warning

A Monologue

Wisdom crieth aloud in the street,
She uttereth her voice in the broad places;
She crieth in the chief place of concourse;
At the entering in of the gates,
In the city, she uttereth her words:

How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?
And scorners delight them in scorning,
And fools hate knowledge?

Turn you at my reproof:
Behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you,
I will make known my words unto you.

Because I have called, and ye refused;
I have stretched out my hand,
And no man regarded;
But ye have set at nought all my counsel,
And would none of my reproof:
I also will laugh in the day of your calamity;
I will mock when your fear cometh;
When your fear cometh as a storm,
And your calamity cometh on as a whirlwind;
When distress and anguish come upon you.
Then shall they call upon me,
But I will not answer;
They shall seek me diligently,
But they shall not find me.
For that they hated knowledge,
And did not choose the fear of the LORD:
They would none of my counsel;
They despised all my reproof:

Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way,
And be filled with their own devices.
For the backsliding of the simple shall slay them,
And the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

But whoso hearkeneth unto me
Shall dwell securely,
And shall be quiet without fear of evil.

iv

Wisdom the Deliverer from Evil

A Sonnet

My son, if thou wilt receive my words,
And lay up my commandments with thee;
So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom,
And apply thine heart to understanding;
Yea, if thou cry after discernment,
And lift up thy voice for understanding;
If thou seek her as silver,
And search for her as for hid treasures:
Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD,
And find the knowledge of God.
For the LORD giveth wisdom;
Out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding:

He layeth up sound wisdom for the upright,
He is a shield to them that walk in integrity;
That he may guard the paths of judgement,
And preserve the way of his saints.

Then shalt thou understand righteousness and judgement,
And equity, yea, every good path.
For wisdom shall enter into thine heart,
And knowledge shall be pleasant unto thy soul;
Discretion shall watch over thee,
Understanding shall keep thee:

To deliver thee from the Way of Evil,
From the men that speak froward things;
Who forsake the paths of uprightness,
To walk in the ways of darkness;
Who rejoice to do evil,
And delight in the frowardness of evil;
Who are crooked in their ways,
And perverse in their paths:

To deliver thee from the Strange Woman,
Even from the stranger which flattereth with her words:
Which forsaketh the friend of her youth,
And forgetteth the covenant of her God:
For her house inclineth unto death,
And her paths unto the dead:

None that go unto her return again,
Neither do they attain unto the paths of life:

That thou mayest walk in the Way of Good Men,
And keep the paths of the righteous.
For the upright shall dwell in the land,
And the perfect shall remain in it.
But the wicked shall be cut off from the land,
And they that deal treacherously shall be rooted out of it.

V

The Commandment and the Reward

A Sonnet

My son, forget not my law;
But let thine heart keep my commandments:
For length of days, and years of life,
And peace, shall they add to thee.
Let not mercy and truth forsake thee:
Bind them about thy neck;
Write them upon the table of thine heart:
So shalt thou find favour,
And good repute in the sight of God and man.
Trust in the LORD with all thine heart,
And lean not upon thine own understanding:

In all thy ways acknowledge him,
And he shall direct thy paths.
Be not wise in thine own eyes;
Fear the LORD, and depart from evil:
It shall be health to thy navel,
And marrow to thy bones.
Honour the LORD with thy substance,
And with the firstfruits of all thine increase:
So shall thy barns be filled with plenty,
And thy fats shall overflow with new wine.

vi

The Creator has made Wisdom the Supreme Prize

A Sonnet

My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD
Neither be weary of his reproof:
For whom the LORD loveth he reproveth;
Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,
And the man that getteth understanding.
For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver,

And the gain thereof than fine gold.
She is more precious than rubies:
And none of the things thou canst desire are to be
compared unto her.

Length of days is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honour.
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,
And all her paths are peace.
She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her:
And happy is every one that retaineth her.

The LORD by wisdom founded the earth;
By understanding he established the heavens.
By his knowledge the depths were broken up,
And the skies drop down the dew.

vii

Wisdom and Security

A Sonnet

My son, let not them depart from thine eyes;
Keep sound wisdom and discretion;
So shall they be life unto thy soul,
And grace to thy neck.

Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely,
And thy foot shall not stumble.
When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid:
Yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

Be not afraid of sudden fear,
Neither of the desolation of the wicked, when it cometh:
For the LORD shall be thy confidence,
And shall keep thy foot from being taken.

viii

Wisdom and Perversity

A Sonnet

Withhold not good from them to whom it is due,
When it is in the power of thine hand to do it.
Say not unto thy neighbour,
Go, and come again,
And to-morrow I will give;
When thou hast it by thee.

Devise not evil against thy neighbour,
Seeing he dwelleth securely by thee.

Strive not with a man without cause,
If he have done thee no harm.
Envy thou not the man of violence,
And choose none of his ways.

For the Perverse is an abomination to the LORD:
But his secret is with the upright.
The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked;
But he blesseth the habitation of the righteous.
Though he scorneth the scorners,
Yet he giveth grace unto the lowly.
The wise shall inherit glory;
But shame shall be the promotion of fools.

ix

The Tradition of Wisdom

A Sonnet

Hear, my sons, the instruction of a father,
And attend to know understanding:
For I give you good doctrine;
Forsake ye not my law.

For I was a son unto my father,
Tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother
And he taught me,
And said unto me:

Let thine heart retain my words;
Keep my commandments, and live:
Get wisdom,
Get understanding;

Forget it not,
Neither decline from the words of my mouth:
Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee;
Love her, and she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing;
Get wisdom:
Yea, with all thou hast gotten
Get understanding.

Exalt her, and she shall promote thee:
She shall bring thee to honour when thou dost embrace her.
She shall give to thine head a chaplet of grace:
A crown of beauty shall she deliver to thee.

x

The Two Paths

A Sonnet

Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings;
And the years of thy life shall be many.
I have taught thee in the way of wisdom;
I have led thee in paths of uprightness.
When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened;
And if thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.
Take fast hold of instruction;
Let her not go:
Keep her;
For she is thy life.

Enter not into the path of the wicked,
And walk not in the way of evil men.
Avoid it,
Pass not by it;
Turn from it,
And pass on.
For they sleep not, except they have done mischief;
And their sleep is taken away, unless they cause some to fall.

For they eat the bread of wickedness,
And drink the wine of violence.

But the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn,
That shineth more and more unto the perfect day.
The way of the wicked is as darkness:
They know not at what they stumble.

xi

Wisdom and Health

A Sonnet

My son, attend to my words;
Incline thine ear unto my sayings.
Let them not depart from thine eyes;
Keep them in the midst of thine heart.
For they are life unto those that find them,
And health to all their flesh.

Keep thy Heart above all that thou guardest,
For out of it are the issues of life.

Put away from thee a froward Mouth,
And perverse lips put far from thee.

Let thine Eyes look right on,
And let thine eyelids look straight before thee.

Make level the path of thy Feet,
And let all thy ways be established.
Turn not to the right hand nor to the left:
Remove thy foot from evil.

xii

The Strange Woman

A Sonnet

My son, attend unto my wisdom;
Incline thine ear to my understanding:
That thou mayest preserve discretion,
And that thy lips may keep knowledge.

For the lips of a Strange Woman drop honey,
And her mouth is smoother than oil:
But her latter end is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword.
Her feet go down to death;
Her steps take hold on Sheol;
So that she findeth not the level path of life:
Her ways are unstable and she knoweth it not.

Now therefore, my sons, hearken unto me,
And depart not from the words of my mouth.
Remove thy way far from her,
And come not nigh the door of her house:
Lest thou give thine honour unto others,
And thy years unto the cruel:
Lest strangers be filled with thy strength;
And thy labours be in the house of an alien;
And thou mourn at thy latter end,
When thy flesh and thy body are consumed,
And say, "How have I hated instruction,
And my heart despised reproof;
Neither have I obeyed the voice of my teachers,
Nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!
I was well nigh in all evil
In the midst of the congregation and assembly."

Drink waters out of thine own cistern,
And running waters out of thine own well.
Should thy springs be dispersed abroad,
And rivers of water in the streets?
Let them be for thyself alone,
And not for strangers with thee.
Let thy fountain be blessed;
And rejoice in the wife of thy youth.

As a loving hind,
And a pleasant doe,
Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times;
And be thou ravished always with her love.
For why shouldest thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman,
And embrace the bosom of a stranger?
For the ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD,
And he maketh level all his paths.

His own iniquities shall take the wicked,
And he shall be holden with the cords of his sin.
He shall die for lack of instruction;
And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

xiii

Suretiship

A Sonnet

My son, if thou art become surety for thy neighbour,
If thou hast stricken thy hands for a stranger,

Thou art snared with the words of thy mouth,
Thou art taken with the words of thy mouth.

Do this now, my son, and deliver thyself,
Seeing thou art come into the hand of thy neighbour:
Go humble thyself, and importune thy neighbour.
Give not sleep to thine eyes,
Nor slumber to thine eyelids.
Deliver thyself,
As a roe from the hand of the hunter,
And as a bird from the hand of the fowler.

xiv

The Sluggard

A Sonnet

Go to the ant, thou Sluggard;
Consider her ways, and be wise:
Which having no chief,
Overseer,
Or ruler,
Provideth her meat in the summer,
And gathereth her food in the harvest.

How long wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard?
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?
"Yet a little sleep,
A little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep"—
So shall thy poverty come as a robber,
And thy want as an armed man!

XV

The Sower of Discord

A Pair of Sonnets

I

A worthless person,
A man of iniquity—
He walketh with a froward mouth;
He winketh with his eyes,
He shuffleth with his feet,
He maketh signs with his fingers;
Frowardness is in his heart,
He deviseth evil continually;
He Soweth Discord.
Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly,
On a sudden shall he be broken, and that without remedy.

2

There be six things which the LORD hateth,
Yea, seven which are an abomination unto him:
Haughty eyes,
A lying tongue,
And hands that shed innocent blood;
An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations,
Feet that be swift in running to mischief,
A false witness that uttereth lies;
And he that Soweth Discord among brethren.

xvi

Adultery the Supreme Folly

A Sonnet

My son, keep the commandment of thy father,
And forsake not the law of thy mother:
Bind them continually upon thine heart,
Tie them about thy neck.

When thou walkest, it shall lead thee;
When thou sleepest, it shall watch over thee;
And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

For the commandment is a lamp;
And the law is light;
And reproofs of instruction are the way of life:

To keep thee from the evil woman,
From the flattery of the stranger's tongue.
Lust not after her beauty in thine heart;
Neither let her take thee with her eyelids.

For on account of a whorish woman a man is brought to a
piece of bread:
And the adulteress hunteth for the precious life.

Can a man take fire in his bosom,
And his clothes not be burned?

Or can one walk upon hot coals,
And his feet not be scorched?

So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife;
Whosoever toucheth her shall not be unpunished.

Men do not despise a thief, if he steal
To satisfy his soul when he is hungry;
But if he be found, he shall restore sevenfold;
He shall give all the substance of his house.

He that committeth adultery with a woman is void of
understanding;
He doeth it that would destroy his own soul.
Wounds and dishonour shall he get;
And his reproach shall not be wiped away.

For jealousy is the rage of a man;
And he will not spare in the day of vengeance.
He will not regard any ransom;
Neither will he be content. though thou givest many
gifts.

xvii

Wisdom and the Strange Woman

A Double Monologue

I

My son, keep my words,
And lay up my commandments with thee.
Keep my commandments, and live;
And my law, as the apple of thine eye.
Bind them upon thy fingers;
Write them upon the table of thine heart.

Say unto Wisdom, Thou art my sister;
And call Understanding thy kinswoman.
That they may keep thee from the Strange Woman,
From the stranger which flattereth with her words.

2

For at the window of my house
I looked forth through my lattice;
And I beheld among the simple ones,
I discerned among the youths,
A young man,
Void of understanding,

Passing through the street near her corner,
And he went the way to her house;
In the twilight, in the evening of the day,
In the blackness of night and the darkness;
And behold, there met him a Woman
With the attire of an harlot, and wily of heart.

She is clamorous and wilful;
Her feet abide not in her house;
Now she is in the streets, now in the broad places,
And lieth in wait at every corner.
So she caught him, and kissed him,
With an impudent face she said unto him:

"Sacrifices of peace offerings are with me;
This day have I paid my vows;
Therefore came I forth to meet thee,
Diligently to seek thy face,
And I have found thee.
I have spread my couch with carpets of tapestry,
With striped cloths of the yarn of Egypt;
I have perfumed my bed
With myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.
Come, let us take our fill of love
Until the morning;
Let us solace ourselves with loves;
For the goodman is not at home,
He is gone a long journey:
He hath taken a bag of money with him;
He will come home at the full moon."

With her much fair speech she causeth him to yield,
With the flattering of her lips she forceth him away.

He goeth after her straightway,
As an ox goeth to the slaughter,
Or as one in fetters to the correction of the fool;
Till an arrow strike through his liver;
As a bird hasteth to the snare,
And knoweth not that it is for his life.

3

Now therefore, my sons, hearken unto me,
And attend to the words of my mouth.
Let not thine heart decline to her ways,
Go not astray in her paths.
For she hath cast down many wounded:
Yea, all her slain are a mighty host.
Her house is the way to Sheol,
Going down to the chambers of death.

4

Doth not Wisdom cry,
And Understanding put forth her voice?
In the top of high places by the way,
Where the paths meet,
She standeth;
Beside the gates, at the entry of the city,
At the coming in at the doors,
She crieth aloud:

Unto you, O men, I call;
And my voice is to the sons of men.
O ye simple, understand subtilty;
And ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

Hear, for I will speak excellent things;
And the opening of my lips shall be right things.
For my mouth shall utter truth;
And wickedness is an abomination to my lips.

All the words of my mouth are righteousness;
There is nothing crooked or perverse in them.
They are all plain to him that understandeth,
And right to them that find knowledge.
Receive my instruction, and not silver;
And knowledge rather than choice gold.
For wisdom is better than rubies;
And all the things that may be desired are not to be compared unto her.

5

I Wisdom have made subtilty my dwelling,
And find out knowledge and discretion.

The fear of the LORD is to hate evil;
Pride and arrogancy,
And the evil way,
And the froward mouth, do I hate.

Counsel is mine,
And sound knowledge;
I am understanding,
I have might.

By me kings reign,
And princes decree justice;
By me princes rule,
And nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

I love them that love me;
And those that seek me diligently shall find me.

Riches and honour are with me;
Durable riches and righteousness;
My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold;
And my revenue than choice silver.

I walk in the way of righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of judgement:
That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance,
And that I may fill their treasuries.

6

The LORD formed me in the beginning of his way,
Before his works of old.

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,
Or ever the earth was.
When there were no depths, I was brought forth,
When there were no fountains abounding with water.

Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, was I brought forth:
While as yet he had not made the earth,
Nor the fields,
Nor the beginning of the dust of the world.

When he established the heavens, I was there:
When he set a circle upon the face of the deep:
When he made firm the skies above:
When the fountains of the deep became strong:
When he gave to the sea its bound,
That the waters should not transgress his commandment:

When he marked out the foundations of the earth,
Then I was by him,
As a master workman,
And I was daily his delight,
Sporting always before him;
Sporting in his habitable earth;
And my delight was with the sons of men.

7

Now therefore, my sons, hearken unto me:
For blessed are they that keep my ways.
Hear instruction, and be wise,
And refuse it not.
Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates,
Waiting at the posts of my doors.
For whoso findeth me findeth life,
And shall obtain favour of the LORD;
But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul;
All they that hate me love death.

xviii

The House of Wisdom and the House of Folly

A Sonnet of Sonnets

A

Wisdom hath builded her house,
She hath hewn out her seven pillars:
She hath killed her beasts;
She hath mingled her wine;
She hath also furnished her table.

She hath sent forth her maidens,
She crieth upon the highest places of the city:
"Whoso is simple,
Let him turn in hither:
As for him that is void of understanding —
Come, eat ye of my bread,
And drink of the wine which I have mingled."
Leave off, ye simple ones and live;
And walk in the way of understanding.

B

He that correcteth a scorner getteth to himself shame:
And he that reproveth a wicked man getteth himself a blot.
Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee:
Reprove a wise man, and he will love thee.
Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser;
Teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.

BB

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom:
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
For by me thy days shall be multiplied,
And the years of thy life shall be increased.
If thou art wise, thou art wise for thyself:
And if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it.

AA

The Foolish Woman is clamorous;
She is simple,
And knoweth nothing;
And she sitteth at the door of her house,
On a seat in the high places of the city,
To call to them that pass by,
Who go right on their ways:
"Whoso is simple,
Let him turn in hither:
And as for him that is void of understanding—
Stolen waters are sweet,
And bread in secret is pleasant."
But he knoweth not that the dead are there;
That her guests are in the depths of Sheol.

BOOK II

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

i

A wise son maketh a glad father:
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

ii

Treasures of wickedness profit nothing:
But righteousness delivereth from death.

iii

The LORD will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish:
But he thrusteth away the desire of the wicked.

iv

He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand:
But the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

v

He that gathereth in summer is a wise son:
But he that sleepeth in harvest is a son that causeth shame.

vi

Blessings are upon the head of the righteous:
But violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

vii

The memory of the just is blessed:
But the name of the wicked shall rot.

viii

The wise in heart will receive commandments:
But a prating fool shall fall.

ix

He that walketh uprightly walketh surely:
But he that perverteth his ways shall be known.

x

He that winketh with the eye causeth sorrow:
But a prating fool shall fall.

xi

The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life:
But violence covereth the mouth of the wicked.

xii

Hatred stirreth up strifes:
But love covereth all transgressions.

xiii

In the lips of him that hath discernment wisdom is found:
But a rod is for the back of him that is void of understanding.

xiv

Wise men lay up knowledge:
But the mouth of the foolish is a present destruction.

xv

The rich man's wealth is his strong city:
The destruction of the poor is their poverty.

xvi

The labour of the righteous tendeth to life:
The increase of the wicked to sin.

xvii

He is in the way of life that heedeth instruction:
But he that forsaketh reproof erreth.

xviii

He that hideth hatred is of lying *lips*:
And he that uttereth a slander is a fool.

xix

In the multitude of words there wanteth not transgression:
But he that refraineth his lips doeth wisely.

xx

The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver:
The heart of the wicked is little worth.

xxi

The lips of the righteous feed many:
But the foolish die for lack of understanding.

xxii

The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich:
And he addeth no sorrow therewith.

xxiii

It is as sport to a fool to do wickedness:
And so is wisdom to a man of understanding.

xxiv

The fear of the wicked, it shall come upon him:
And the desire of the righteous shall be granted.

xxv

When the whirlwind passeth, the wicked is no more:
But the righteous is an everlasting foundation.

xxvi

As vinegar to the teeth,
And as smoke to the eyes,
So is the sluggard to them that send him.

xxvii

The fear of the LORD prolongeth days:
But the years of the wicked shall be shortened.

xxviii

The hope of the righteous shall be gladness:
But the expectation of the wicked shall perish.

xxix

The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright:
But it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity.

xxx

The righteous shall never be removed:
But the wicked shall not dwell in the land.

xxxi

The mouth of the righteous bringeth forth wisdom:
But the froward tongue shall be cut off.

xxxii

The lips of the righteous know what is acceptable:
But the mouth of the wicked speaketh frowardness.

xxxiii

A false balance is an abomination to the LORD:
But a just weight is his delight.

xxxiv

When pride cometh, then cometh shame:
But with the lowly is wisdom.

xxxv

The integrity of the upright shall guide them:
But the perverseness of the treacherous shall destroy them.

xxxvi

Riches profit not in the day of wrath:
But righteousness delivereth from death.

xxxvii

The righteousness of the perfect shall direct his way:
But the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness.

xxxviii

The righteousness of the upright shall deliver them:
But they that deal treacherously shall be taken in their own mischief.

xxxix

When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish:
And the hope of iniquity perisheth.

xl

The righteous is delivered out of trouble:
And the wicked cometh in his stead.

xli

With his mouth the godless man destroyeth his neighbour:
But through knowledge shall the righteous be delivered.

xlii

When it goeth well with the righteous the city rejoiceth:
And when the wicked perish, there is shouting.

xliii

By the blessing of the upright the city is exalted:
But it is overthrown by the mouth of the wicked.

xliv

He that despiseth his neighbour is void of wisdom:
But a man of understanding holdeth his peace.

xlv

He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets:
But he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.

xlvi

Where no wise guidance is, the people falleth:
But in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

xlvii

He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it:
But he that hateth suretiship is sure.

xlviii

A gracious woman retaineth honour:
And violent men retain riches.

xlix

The merciful man doeth good to his own soul:
But he that is cruel troubleth his own flesh.

l

The wicked earneth deceitful wages:
But he that soweth righteousness hath a sure reward.

li

He that is steadfast in righteousness shall attain unto life:
And he that pursueth evil doeth it to his own death.

lii

They that are perverse in heart are an abomination to the LORD:
But such as are perfect in their way are his delight.

liii

Though hand join in hand, the evil man shall not be unpunished:
But the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

liv

As a jewel of gold
In a swine's snout,
So is a fair woman which is without discretion.

lv

The desire of the righteous is only good:
But the expectation of the wicked is wrath.

lvi

There is that scattereth, and increaseth yet more:
And there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth only to want.

lvii

The liberal soul shall be made fat:
And he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

lviii

He that withholdeth corn, the people shall curse him:
But blessing shall be upon the head of him that selleth it.

lix

He that diligently seeketh good seeketh favour:
But he that searcheth after mischief, it shall come unto him.

lx

He that trusteth in his riches shall fall:
But the righteous shall flourish as the green leaf.

lxi

He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind:
And the foolish shall be servant to the wise of heart.

lxii

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life:
And he that is wise winneth souls.

lxiii

Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth:
How much more the wicked and the sinner!

lxiv

Whoso loveth correction loveth knowledge:
But he that hateth reproof is brutish.

lxv

A good man shall obtain favour of the LORD:
But a man of wicked devices will he condemn.

lxvi

A man shall not be established by wickedness:
But the root of the righteous shall never be moved.

lxvii

A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband:
But she that maketh ashamed is as rottenness in his bones.

lxviii

The thoughts of the righteous are just:
But the counsels of the wicked are deceit.

lxix

The words of the wicked are of lying in wait for blood:
But the mouth of the upright shall deliver them.

lxx

Overthrow the wicked, and they are not:
But the house of the righteous shall stand.

lxxi

A man shall be commended according to his wisdom:
But he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised.

lxxii

Better is he that is lightly esteemed, and hath a servant,
Than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread.

lxxiii

A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast:
But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

lxxiv

He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread:
But he that followeth after vain persons is void of understanding.

lxxv

The wicked desireth the net of evil men:
But the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit.

lxxvi

In the transgression of the lips is a snare to the evil man:
But the righteous shall come out of trouble.

lxxvii

A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth:
And the doings of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.

lxxviii

The way of the foolish is right in his own eyes:
But he that is wise hearkeneth unto counsel.

lxxix

A fool's vexation is presently known:
But a prudent man concealeth shame.

lxxx

He that uttereth truth sheweth forth righteousness:
But a false witness deceit.

lxxxi

There is that speaketh rashly like the piercings of a sword:
But the tongue of the wise is health.

lxxxii

The lip of truth shall be established for ever:
But a lying tongue is but for a moment.

lxxxiii

Deceit is in the heart of them that devise evil:
But to the counsellors of peace is joy.

lxxxiv

There shall no mischief happen to the righteous:
But the wicked shall be filled with evil.

lxxxv

Lying lips are an abomination to the LORD:
But they that deal truly are his delight.

lxxxvi

A prudent man concealeth knowledge:
But the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness.

lxxxvii

The hand of the diligent shall bear rule:
But the slothful shall be put under taskwork.

lxxxviii

Heaviness in the heart of a man maketh it stoop:
But a good word maketh it glad.

lxxxix

The righteous is a guide to his neighbour:
But the way of the wicked causeth them to err.

xc

The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting:
But the precious substance of men is to the diligent.

xci

In the way of righteousness is life:
And in the pathway thereof there is no death.

xcii

A wise son heareth his father's instruction:
But a scorner heareth not rebuke.

xciii

A man shall eat good by the fruit of his mouth:
But the soul of the treacherous shall eat violence.

xciv

He that guardeth his mouth keepeth his life:
But he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction.

xcv

The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing:
But the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

xcvi

A righteous man hateth lying:
But a wicked man is loathsome, and cometh to shame.

xcvii

Righteousness guardeth him that is upright in the way:
But wickedness overthroweth the sinner.

xcviii

There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing:
There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great wealth.

xcix

The ransom of a man's life is his riches:
But the poor heareth no threatening.

c

The light of the righteous rejoiceth:
But the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

ci

By pride cometh only contention:
But with the well advised is wisdom.

cii

Wealth gotten by vanity shall be diminished:
But he that gathereth by labour shall have increase.

ciii

Hope deferred maketh the heart sick:
But when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life.

civ

Whoso despiseth the word bringeth destruction on him self:
But he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded

cv

The law of the wise is a fountain of life,
To depart from the snares of death.

cvi

Good understanding giveth favour:
But the way of the treacherous is rugged.

cvii

Every prudent man worketh with knowledge:
But a fool spreadeth out folly.

cviii

A wicked messenger falleth into evil:
But a faithful ambassador is health.

cix

Poverty and shame shall be to him that refuseth correction:
But he that regardeth reproof shall be honoured.

cx

The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul:
But it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil.

cxi

Walk with wise men, and thou shalt be wise:
But the companion of fools shall smart for it.

cxii

Evil pursueth sinners:
But the righteous shall be recompensed with good.

cxiii

A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children:
And the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the righteous.

cxiv

Much food is in the tillage of the poor:
But there is that is destroyed by reason of injustice.

cxv

He that spareth his rod hateth his son:
But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.

cxvi

The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his soul:
But the belly of the wicked shall want.

cxvii

Every wise woman buildeth her house:
But the foolish plucketh it down with her own hands.

cxviii

He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the LORD:
But he that is perverse in his ways despiseth him.

cxix

In the mouth of the foolish is a rod of pride:
But the lips of the wise shall preserve them.

cxx

Where no oxen are, the crib is clean:
But much increase is by the strength of the ox.

cxxi

A faithful witness will not lie:
But a false witness uttereth lies.

cxxii

A scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not:
But knowledge is easy unto him that hath understanding.

cxxiii

Go into the presence of a foolish man:
And thou shalt not perceive in him the lips of knowledge.

cxxiv

The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way:
But the folly of fools is deceit.

cxxv

The foolish make a mock at guilt:
But among the upright there is good will.

cxxvi

The heart knoweth its own bitterness:
And a stranger doth not intermeddle with its joy.

cxxvii

The house of the wicked shall be overthrown:
But the tent of the upright shall flourish.

cxxviii

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man:
But the end thereof are the ways of death.

cxxix

Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful:
And the end of mirth is heaviness.

cxxx

The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways:
And a good man shall be satisfied from himself.

cxxxi

The simple believeth every word:
But the prudent man looketh well to his going.

cxxxii

A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil:
But the fool beareth himself insolently, and is confident.

cxxxiii

He that is soon angry will deal foolishly:
And a man of wicked devices is hated.

cxxxiv

The simple inherit folly:
But the prudent are crowned with knowledge.

cxxxv

The evil bow before the good:
And the wicked at the gates of the righteous.

cxxxvi

The poor is hated even of his own neighbour:
But the rich hath many friends.

cxxxvii

He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth:
But he that hath pity on the poor, happy is he.

cxxxviii

Do they not err that devise evil?
But mercy and truth shall be to them that devise good.

cxxxix

In all labour there is profit:
But the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.

cxl

The crown of the wise is their riches:
But the folly of fools is only folly.

cxli

A true witness delivereth souls:
But he that uttereth lies causeth deceit.

cxlii

In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence:
And his children shall have a place of refuge.

cxliii

The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life,
To depart from the snares of death.

cxliv

In the multitude of people is the king's glory:
But in the want of people is the destruction of the prince.

cxlv

He that is slow to anger is of great understanding:
But he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly.

cxlvi

A sound heart is the life of the flesh:
But envy is the rottenness of the bones.

cxlvii

He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker:
But he that hath mercy on the needy honoureth him.

cxlviii

The wicked is thrust down in his calamity:
But the righteous hath a refuge in his death.

cxlix

Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding:
But that which is in the inward part of fools is made known.

cl

Righteousness exalteth a nation:
But sin is a reproach to any people.

cli

The king's favour is toward a servant that dealeth wisely:
But his wrath shall be against him that causeth shame.

clii

A soft answer turneth away wrath:
But a grievous word stirreth up anger.

cliii

The tongue of the wise uttereth knowledge aright:
But the mouth of fools poureth out folly.

cliv

The eyes of the LORD are in every place:
Keeping watch upon the evil and the good.

clv

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life:
But perverseness therein is a breaking of the spirit.

clvi

A fool despiseth his father's correction:
But he that regardeth reproof getteth prudence.

clvii

In the house of the righteous is much treasure:
But in the revenues of the wicked is trouble.

clviii

The lips of the wise disperse knowledge:
But the heart of the foolish doeth not so.

clix

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD:
But the prayer of the upright is his delight.

clx

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD:
But he loveth him that followeth after righteousness.

clxi

There is grievous correction for him that forsaketh the way:
And he that hateth reproof shall die.

clxii

Sheol and Abaddon are before the LORD:
How much more then the hearts of the children of men!

clxiii

A scorner loveth not to be reproved:
He will not go unto the wise.

clxiv

A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance:
But by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken.

clxv

The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge:
But the mouth of fools feedeth on folly.

clxvi

All the days of the afflicted are evil:
But he that is of a cheerful heart hath a continual feast.

clxvii

Better is little with the fear of the LORD:
Than great treasure and trouble therewith.

clxviii

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is:
Than a stalled ox and hatred therewith.

clxix

A wrathful man stirreth up contention:
But he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife.

clxx

The way of the sluggard is as an hedge of thorns:
But the path of the upright is made an high way.

clxxi

A wise son maketh a glad father:
But a foolish man despiseth his mother.

clxxii

Folly is joy to him that is void of wisdom:
But a man of understanding maketh straight his going.

clxxiii

Where there is no counsel purposes are disappointed:
But in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

clxxiv

A man hath joy in the answer of his mouth:
And a word in due season, how good is it!

clxxv

To the wise the way of life goeth upward,
That he may depart from Sheol beneath.

clxxvi

The LORD will root up the house of the proud:
But he will establish the border of the widow.

clxxvii

Evil devices are an abomination to the LORD:
But pleasant words are pure.

clxxviii

He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house:
But he that hateth gifts shall live.

clxxix

The heart of the righteous studieth to answer:
But the mouth of the wicked poureth out evil things.

clxxx

The LORD is far from the wicked:
But he heareth the prayer of the righteous.

clxxxi

The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart:
And good tidings make the bones fat.

clxxxii

The ear that hearkeneth to the reproof of life
Shall abide among the wise.

clxxxiii

He that refuseth correction despiseth his own soul:
But he that hearkeneth to reproof getteth understanding

clxxxiv

The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom:
And before honour goeth humility.

clxxxv

The preparations of the heart belong to man:
But the answer of the tongue is from the LORD.

clxxxvi

All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes:
But the LORD weigheth the spirits.

clxxxvii

Commit thy works unto the LORD,
And thy thoughts shall be established.

clxxxviii

The LORD hath made everything for its own end:
Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil.

clxxxix

Every one that is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD:
Though hand join in hand, he shall not be unpunished.

cxc

By mercy and truth iniquity is purged:
And by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil.

cxci

When a man's ways please the LORD,
He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.

cxcii

Better is a little with righteousness
Than great revenues with injustice.

cxciii

A man's heart deviseth his way:
But the LORD directeth his steps.

cxciv

A divine sentence is in the lips of the king:
His mouth shall not transgress in judgement.

cxcv

A just balance and scales are the LORD'S:
All the weights of the bag are his work.

cxcvi

It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness:
For the throne is established by righteousness.

cxcvii

Righteous lips are the delight of kings;
And they love him that speaketh right.

cxcviii

The wrath of a king is as messengers of death:
But a wise man will pacify it.

cxcix

In the light of the king's countenance is life;
And his favour is as a cloud of the latter rain.

cc

How much better is it to get wisdom than gold!
Yea, to get understanding is rather to be chosen than silver.

cci

The high way of the upright is to depart from evil:
He that keepeth his way preserveth his soul.

ccii

Pride goeth before destruction:
And an haughty spirit before a fall.

cciii

Better it is to be of a lowly spirit with the poor
Than to divide the spoil with the proud.

cciv

He that giveth heed unto the word shall find good:
And whoso trusteth in the LORD, happy is he.

ccv

The wise in heart shall be called prudent:
And the sweetness of the lips increaseth learning.

ccvi

Understanding is a wellspring of life unto him that hath it;
But the correction of fools is their folly.

ccvii

The heart of the wise instructeth his mouth,
And addeth learning to his lips.

ccviii

Pleasant words are as an honeycomb,
Sweet to the soul, and health to the bones.

ccix

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man,
But the end thereof are the ways of death.

ccx

The appetite of the labouring man laboureth for him;
For his mouth craveth it of him.

ccxi

A worthless man deviseth mischief:
And in his lips there is as a scorching fire.

ccxii

A froward man scattereth abroad strife;
And a whisperer separateth chief friends.

ccxiii

A man of violence enticeth his neighbour,
And leadeth him in a way that is not good.

ccxiv

He that shutteth his eyes, it is to devise froward things;
He that compresseth his lips bringeth evil to pass.

ccxv

The hoary head is a crown of glory,
If it be found in the way of righteousness.

ccxvi

He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty;
And he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.

ccxvii

The lot is cast into the lap;
But the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD

ccxviii

Better is a dry morsel and quietness therewith
Than an house full of feasting with strife.

ccxix

A servant that dealeth wisely shall have rule over a son
that causeth shame,
And shall have part in the inheritance among the brethren.

ccxx

The fining pot is for silver,
And the furnace for gold:
But the LORD trieth the hearts.

ccxxi

An evil-doer giveth heed to wicked lips;
And a liar giveth ear to a mischievous tongue.

ccxxii

Whoso mocketh the poor reproacheth his Maker:
And he that is glad at calamity shall not be unpunished.

ccxxiii

Children's children are the crown of old men;
And the glory of children are their fathers.

ccxxiv

Excellent speech becometh not a fool:
Much less do lying lips a prince.

ccxxv

A gift is as a precious stone in the eyes of him that hath it:
Whithersoever it turneth, it prospereth.

ccxxvi

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love:
But he that harpeth on a matter separateth chief friends.

ccxxvii

A rebuke entereth deeper into one that hath understanding
Than an hundred stripes into a fool.

ccxxviii

An evil man seeketh only rebellion;
Therefore a cruel messenger shall be sent against him.

ccxxix

Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man,
Rather than a fool in his folly.

ccxxx

Whoso rewardeth evil for good,
Evil shall not depart from his house.

ccxxxi

The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water:
Therefore leave off contention, before there be quarrelling.

ccxxxii

He that justifieth the wicked,
And he that condemneth the righteous,
Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

ccxxxiii

Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to buy wisdom,
Seeing he hath no understanding?

ccxxxiv

A friend loveth at all times,
And a brother is born for adversity.

ccxxxv

A man void of understanding striketh hands,
And becometh surety in the presence of his neighbour.

ccxxxvi

He loveth transgression that loveth strife:
He that raiseth high his gate seeketh destruction.

ccxxxvii

He that hath a froward heart findeth no good:
And he that hath a perverse tongue falleth into mischief.

ccxxxviii

He that begetteth a fool doeth it to his sorrow;
And the father of a fool hath no joy.

ccxxxix

A merry heart is a good medicine:
But a broken spirit drieth up the bones.

ccxl

A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom,
To pervert the ways of judgement.

ccxli

Wisdom is before the face of him that hath understanding:
But the eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth.

ccxlii

A foolish son is a grief to his father,
And a bitterness to her that bare him.

ccxliii

Also to punish the righteous is not good,
Nor to smite the noble for their uprightness.

ccxliv

He that spareth his words hath knowledge:
And he that is of a cool spirit is a man of understanding.

ccxlv

Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise:
When he shutteth his lips, he is esteemed as prudent.

ccxlvi

He that separateth himself seeketh his own desire,
And rageth against all sound wisdom.

ccxlvii

A fool hath no delight in understanding,
But only that his heart may reveal itself.

ccxlviii

When the wicked cometh, there cometh also contempt,
And with ignominy cometh reproach.

ccxlix

The words of a man's mouth are as deep waters;
The wellspring of wisdom is as a flowing brook.

ccl

To accept the person of the wicked is not good,
Nor to turn aside the righteous in judgement.

ccli

A fool's lips enter into contention,
And his mouth calleth for stripes.

cclii

A fool's mouth is his destruction,
And his lips are the snare of his soul.

ccliii

The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels,
And they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

ccliv

He also that is slack in his work
Is brother to him that is a destroyer.

cclv

The name of the LORD is a strong tower:
The righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

cclvi

The rich man's wealth is his strong city,
And as an high wall in his own imagination.

cclvii

Before destruction the heart of man is haughty,
And before honour goeth humility.

cclviii

He that giveth answer before he heareth,
It is folly and shame unto him.

cclix

The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;
But a broken spirit who can bear?

cclx

The heart of the prudent getteth knowledge;
And the ear of the wise seeketh knowledge.

cclxi

A man's gift maketh room for him,
And bringeth him before great men.

cclxii

He that pleadeth his cause first seemeth just;
But his neighbour cometh and searcheth him out.

cclxiii

The lot causeth contentions to cease,
And parteth between the mighty.

cclxiv

A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city;
And such contentions are like the bars of a castle.

cclxv

A man's belly shall be filled with the fruit of his mouth;
With the increase of his lips shall he be satisfied.

cclxvi

Death and life are in the power of the tongue;
And they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

cclxvii

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing,
And obtaineth favour of the LORD.

cclxviii

The poor useth intreaties:
But the rich answereth roughly.

cclxix

He that maketh many friends doeth it to his own destruction:
But there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

cclxx

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity
Than he that is perverse in his lips and is a fool.

cclxxi

Also, that the soul be without knowledge is not good;
And he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.

cclxxii

The foolishness of man subverteth his way;
And his heart fretteth against the LORD.

cclxxiii

Wealth addeth many friends:
But the poor is separated from his friend.

cclxxiv

A false witness shall not be unpunished;
And he that uttereth lies shall not escape.

cclxxv

Many will intreat the favour of the liberal man:
And every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.

cclxxvi

All the brethren of the poor do hate him:
How much more do his friends go far from him!
He pursueth them with words, but they are gone.

cclxxvii

He that getteth wisdom loveth his own soul:
He that keepeth understanding shall find good.

cclxxviii

A false witness shall not be unpunished;
And he that uttereth lies shall perish.

cclxxix

Delicate living is not seemly for a fool;
Much less for a servant to have rule over princes.

cclxxx

The discretion of a man maketh him slow to anger,
And it is his glory to pass over a transgression.

cclxxxi

The king's wrath is as the roaring of a lion;
But his favour is as dew upon the grass.

cclxxxii

A foolish son is the calamity of his father:
And the contentions of a wife are a continual dropping.

cclxxxiii

House and riches are an inheritance from fathers:
But a prudent wife is from the LORD.

cclxxxiv

Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep;
And the idle soul shall suffer hunger.

cclxxxv

He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his soul:
But he that is careless of his ways shall die.

cclxxxvi

He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD,
And his good deed will he pay him again.

cclxxxvii

Chasten thy son, seeing there is hope;
And set not thy heart on his destruction.

cclxxxviii

A man of great wrath shall bear the penalty:
For if thou deliver him, thou must do it yet again.

cclxxxix

Hear counsel,
And receive instruction,
That thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.

ccxc

There are many devices in a man's heart;
But the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

ccxci

The desire of a man is the measure of his kindness:
And a poor man is better than a liar.

ccxcii

The fear of the LORD tendeth to life:
And he that hath it shall abide satisfied;
He shall not be visited with evil.

ccxciii

The sluggard burieth his hand in the dish,
And will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.

ccxciv

Smite a scorner, and the simple will learn prudence;
And reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.

ccxcv

He that spoileth his father,
And chaseth away his mother,
Is a son that causeth shame and bringeth reproach.

ccxcvi

Cease, my son, to hear instruction
Only to err from the words of knowledge.

ccxcvii

A worthless witness mocketh at judgement:
And the mouth of the wicked swalloweth iniquity.

ccxcviii

Judgements are prepared for scorners,
And stripes for the back of fools.

ccxcix

Wine is a mocker,
Strong drink a brawler;
And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise.

ccc

The terror of a king is as the roaring of a lion:
He that provoketh him to anger sinneth against his own life.

ccci

It is an honour for a man to keep aloof from strife:
But every fool will be quarrelling.

cccii

The slothful will not plow by reason of the winter;
Therefore he shall beg in harvest, and have nothing.

cccii

Counsel in the heart of man is like deep water;
But a man of understanding will draw it out.

ccciv

Most men will proclaim every one his own kindness:
But a faithful man who can find?

cccv

A just man that walketh in his integrity,
Blessed are his children after him.

cccvi

A king that sitteth on the throne of judgement
Winnoweth away all evil with his eyes.

cccvii

Who can say, I have made my heart clean,
I am pure from my sin?

cccviii

Divers weights,
And divers measures,
Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.

cccix

Even a child maketh himself known by his doings,
Whether his work be pure, and whether it be right.

cccx

The hearing ear,
And the seeing eye,
The LORD hath made even both of them.

cccxi

Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty;
Open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread.

cccxii

It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer:
But when he is gone his way, then he boasteth.

cccxiii

There is gold,
And abundance of rubies;
But the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel.

cccxiv

Take his garment that is surety for a stranger;
And hold him in pledge that is surety for strangers.

cccxv

Bread of falsehood is sweet to a man;
But afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel.

cccxvi

Every purpose is established by counsel;
And by wise guidance make thou war.

cccxvii

He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets:
Therefore meddle not with him that openeth wide his lips.

cccxviii

Whoso curseth his father or his mother,
His lamp shall be put out in the blackest darkness.

cccxix

An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning;
But the end thereof shall not be blessed.

cccxx

Say not thou, I will recompense evil:
Wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.

cccxxi

Divers weights are an abomination to the LORD;
And a false balance is not good.

cccxxii

A man's goings are of the LORD;
How then can man understand his way?

cccxxiii

It is a snare to a man rashly to say, It is holy,
And after vows to make inquiry.

cccxxiv

A wise king winnoweth the wicked,
And bringeth the threshing wheel over them.

cccxxv

The spirit of man is the lamp of the LORD,
Searching all the innermost parts of the belly.

cccxxvi

Mercy and truth preserve the king:
And his throne is upholden by mercy.

cccxxvii

The glory of young men is their strength:
And the beauty of old men is the hoary head.

cccxxviii

Stripes that wound cleanse away evil:
And strokes reach the innermost parts of the belly.

cccxxix

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD as the water-courses:
He turneth it whithersoever he will.

cccxxx

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes:
But the LORD weigheth the hearts.

cccxxxi

To do justice and judgement
Is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.

cccxxxii

An high look,
And a proud heart,
Even the lamp of the wicked, is sin.

cccxxxiii

The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness:
But every one that is hasty hasteth only to want.

cccxxxiv

The getting of treasures by a lying tongue
Is a vapour driven to and fro;
They that seek them seek death.

cccxxxv

The violence of the wicked shall sweep them away;
Because they refuse to do judgement.

cccxxxvi

The way of him that is laden with guilt is exceeding
crooked:
But as for the pure, his work is straight.

cccxxxvii

It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop
Than with a contentious woman in a wide house.

cccxxxviii

The soul of the wicked desireth evil:
His neighbour findeth no favour in his eyes.

cccxxxix

When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise:
And when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.

cccxl

The righteous man considereth the house of the wicked,
How the wicked are overthrown to their ruin.

cccxli

Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor,
He also shall cry, but shall not be heard.

cccxlii

A gift in secret pacifieth anger,
And a present in the bosom strong wrath.

cccxliii

It is joy to the righteous to do judgement;
But it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity.

cccxliv

The man that wandereth out of the way of understanding
Shall rest in the congregation of the dead.

cccxlv

He that loveth pleasure shall be a poor man:
He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich.

cccxlvi

The wicked is a ransom for the righteous;
And the treacherous cometh in the stead of the upright.

cccxlvii

It is better to dwell in a desert land
Than with a contentious and fretful woman.

cccxlviii

There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise;
But a foolish man swalloweth it up.

cccxlix

He that followeth after righteousness and mercy
Findeth life, righteousness, and honour.

cccl

A wise man scaleth the city of the mighty,
And bringeth down the strength of the confidence thereof.

cccli

Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue
Keepeth his soul from troubles.

ccclii

The proud and haughty man, scorner is his name,
He worketh in the arrogance of pride.

cccliii

The desire of the slothful killeth him;
For his hands refuse to labour.

cccliv

There is that coveteth greedily all the day long:
But the righteous giveth and withholdeth not.

ccclv

The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination:
How much more, when he bringeth it to atone for wickedness!

ccclvi

A false witness shall perish:
But the man that heareth shall speak unchallenged.

ccclvii

A wicked man hardeneth his face:
But as for the upright, he ordereth his ways.

ccclviii

There is no wisdom nor understanding
Nor counsel against the LORD.

ccclix

The horse is prepared against the day of battle:
But victory is of the LORD.

ccclx

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,
And loving favour rather than silver and gold.

ccclxi

The rich and the poor meet together:
The LORD is the maker of them all.

ccclxii

A prudent man seeth the evil, and hideth himself:
But the simple pass on, and suffer for it.

ccclxiii

The reward of humility and the fear of the LORD
Is riches, and honour, and life.

ccclxiv

Thorns and snares are in the way of the froward:
He that keepeth his soul shall be far from them.

ccclxv

Train up a child in the way he should go,
And even when he is old he will not depart from it.

ccclxvi

The rich ruleth over the poor,
And the borrower is servant to the lender.

ccclxvii

He that soweth iniquity shall reap calamity:
And the rod of his wrath shall fail.

ccclxviii

He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed;
For he giveth of his bread to the poor.

ccclxix

Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out;
Yea, strife and ignominy shall cease.

ccclxx

He that loveth pureness of heart,
For the grace of his lips the king shall be his friend.

ccclxxi

The eyes of the LORD preserve him that hath knowledge,
But he overthroweth the words of the treacherous man.

ccclxxii

The sluggard saith:
There is a lion without,
I shall be murdered in the streets.

ccclxxiii

The mouth of strange women is a deep pit:
He that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.

ccclxxiv

Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child:
But the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

ccclxxv

He that oppresseth the poor to increase his gain,
And he that giveth to the rich, cometh only to want.

BOOK III

A WISDOM EPISTLE

Incline thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my knowledge; for it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee, if they be established together upon thy lips. That thy trust may be in the LORD, I have made them known to thee this day, even to thee. Have not I written unto thee excellent things of counsels and knowledge; to make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mayest carry back words of truth to them that send thee?

i

An Epigram

Rob not the poor, because he is poor,
Neither oppress the afflicted in the gate:
For the LORD will plead their cause,
And despoil of life those that despoil them.

ii

An Epigram

Make no friendship with a man that is given to anger;
And with a wrathful man thou shalt not go:
Lest thou learn his ways,
And get a snare to thy soul.

iii

An Epigram

Be thou not one of them that strike hands,
Or of them that are sureties for debts:
If thou hast not wherewith to pay,
Why should he take away thy bed from under thee?

iv

Remove not the ancient landmark,
Which thy fathers have set.

v

Seest thou a man diligent in his business?
He shall stand before kings;
He shall not stand before mean men.

vi

Awe before Appetite

An Epigram

When thou sittest to eat with a ruler,
Consider diligently him that is before thee;
And put a knife to thy throat,
If thou be a man given to appetite.
Be not desirous of his dainties;
Seeing they are deceitful meat.

vii

Transitoriness of Riches

An Epigram

Weary not thyself to be rich;
Cease from thine own wisdom;

Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?
For riches certainly make themselves wings,
Like an eagle that flieth toward heaven.

viii

Hospitality of the Evil Eye

An Epigram

Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye,
Neither desire thou his dainties;
For as one that reckoneth within himself, so is he:
Eat and drink, saith he to thee;
But his heart is not with thee.
The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up,
And lose thy sweet words.

ix

Speak not in the hearing of a fool;
For he will despise the wisdom of thy words.

x

An Epigram

Remove not the ancient landmark;
And enter not into the fields of the fatherless:
For their redeemer is strong;
He shall plead their cause against thee.

xi

Apply thine heart unto instruction,
And thine ears to the words of knowledge.

xii

An Epigram

Withhold not correction from the child:
For if thou beat him with the rod, he shall not die.
Thou shalt beat him with the rod,
And shalt deliver his soul from Sheol.

xiii

An Epigram

My son, if thine heart be wise,
My heart shall be glad, even mine:
Yea, my reins shall rejoice,
When thy lips speak right things.

xiv

An Epigram

Let not thine heart envy sinners:
But be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long:
For surely there is a reward;
And thy hope shall not be cut off.

xv

Gluttony

An Epigram

Hear thou, my son, and be wise,
And guide thine heart in the way.
Be not among winebibbers;
Among gluttonous eaters of flesh:
For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty:
And drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags.

xvi

Hearken unto thy father that begat thee,
And despise not thy mother when she is old.

xvii

Buy the truth,
And sell it not;
Yea, wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.

xviii

An Epigram

The father of the righteous shall greatly rejoice:
And he that begetteth a wise child shall have joy of him.
Let thy father and thy mother be glad,
And let her that bare thee rejoice.

xix

The Pit of Whoredom

An Epigram

My son, give me thine heart,
And let thine eyes delight in my ways:
For a Whore is a deep ditch;
And a strange woman is a narrow pit.
Yea, she lieth in wait as a robber,
And increaseth the treacherous among men.

xx

Wine and Woe

A Riddle Sonnet

Who hath woe?
Who hath sorrow?
Who hath contentions?
Who hath complaining?
Who hath wounds without cause?
Who hath redness of eyes?

They that tarry long at the wine;
They that go to seek out mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine
When it is red,
When it giveth its colour in the cup,
When it goeth down smoothly:

At the last it biteth like a serpent,
And stingeth like an adder.
Thine eyes shall behold strange things,
And thine heart shall utter froward things.
Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea,
Or as he that lieth on the top of a mast.
"They have stricken me,
And I was not hurt;
They have beaten me,
And I felt it not;
When shall I awake?
I will seek it yet again."

xxi

An Epigram

Be not thou envious against evil men,
Neither desire to be with them:
For their heart studieth oppression,
And their lips talk of mischief.

xxii

An Epigram

Through wisdom is an house builded;
And by understanding it is established:
And by knowledge are the chambers filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.

xxiii

An Epigram

A wise man is strong;
Yea, a man of knowledge increaseth might;
For by wise guidance thou shalt make thy war,
And in the multitude of counsellors there is safety.

xxiv

Wisdom is too high for a fool:
He openeth not his mouth in the gate.

xxv

He that deviseth to do evil,
Men shall call him a mischievous person.

xxvi

The thought of the foolish is sin:
And the scorner is an abomination to men.

xxvii

If thou faint in the day of adversity,
Thy strength is small.

xxviii

The Duty of Rescue

An Epigram

Deliver them that are carried away unto death,
And those that are ready to be slain see that thou hold back.
If thou sayest, Behold we knew not this:
Doth not he that weigheth the hearts consider it?
And he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it?
And shall not he render to every man according to his work?

xxix

Wisdom and Honey

An Epigram

My son, eat thou honey, for it is good,
And the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste:
So shalt thou know wisdom to be unto thy soul:
If thou hast found it, then shall there be a reward,
And thy hope shall not be cut off.

xxx

An Epigram

Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the habitation of the righteous;
Spoil not his resting place:
For a righteous man falleth seven times, and riseth up again:
But the wicked are overthrown by calamity.

xxxi

An Epigram

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth,
And let not thine heart be glad when he is overthrown:
Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him,
And he turn away his wrath from him.

xxxii

An Epigram

Fret not thyself because of evil-doers;
Neither be thou envious at the wicked:
For there will be no reward to the evil man;
The lamp of the wicked shall be put out.

xxxiii

An Epigram

My son, fear thou the LORD and the king;
And meddle not with them that are given to change:
For their calamity shall rise suddenly;
And who knoweth the destruction of their years?

Postscript

THESE ALSO ARE SAYINGS OF THE WISE

XXXIV

Respect of Persons

An Epigram

To have respect of persons in judgement is not good.
He that saith unto the wicked, Thou art righteous,
Peoples shall curse him, nations shall abhor him.
But to them that rebuke him shall be delight,
And a good blessing shall come upon them.

XXXV

He kisseth the lips
That giveth a right answer.

XXXVI

Prepare thy work without,
And make it ready for thee in the field;
And afterwards build thine house.

XXXVII

An Epigram

Be not a witness against thy neighbour without cause;
And deceive not with thy lips;

Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me,
I will render to the man according to his work.

xxxviii

The Field of the Slothful

A Sonnet

I went by the field of the Slothful,
And by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;
And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns,
The face thereof was covered with nettles,
And the stone wall thereof was broken down.
Then I beheld,
And considered well:

I saw,
And received instruction.
"Yet a little sleep,
A little slumber,
A little folding of the hands to sleep"—
So shall thy poverty come as a robber;
And thy want as an armed man.

BOOK IV

PROVERBS OF SOLOMON

COPIED OUT BY THE MEN OF HEZEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH

I

The King

A Proverb Cluster

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing:
But the glory of Kings is to search out a matter.

*

The heaven for height,
And the earth for depth,
And the heart of Kings is unsearchable.

*

Take away the dross from the silver,
And there cometh forth a vessel for the finer:
Take away the wicked from before the King,
And his throne shall be established in righteousness.

*

Put not thyself forward in the presence of the King,
And stand not in the place of great men;
For better is it that it be said unto thee, Come up hither,
Than that thou shouldest be put lower
In the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen.

ii

Go not forth hastily to strive,
Lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof,
When thy neighbour hath put thee to shame.

iii

An Epigram

Debate thy cause with thy neighbour himself,
And disclose not the secret of another:
Lest he that heareth it revile thee,
And thine infamy turn not away.

iv

A word fitly spoken
Is like apples of gold
In baskets of silver.

v

As an earring of gold,
And an ornament of fine gold,
So is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear.

vi

As the cold of snow in the time of harvest,
So is a faithful messenger to them that send him:
For he refresheth the soul of his masters.

vii

As clouds and wind without rain,
So is he that boasteth himself of his gifts falsely.

viii

By long forbearing is a ruler persuaded,
And a soft tongue breaketh the bone.

ix

Hast thou found honey? eat so much as is sufficient for thee;
Lest thou be filled therewith, and vomit it.

x

Let thy foot be seldom in thy neighbour's house;
Lest he be weary of thee, and hate thee.

xi

A man that beareth false witness against his neighbour
Is a maul, and a sword,
And a sharp arrow.

xii

Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble
Is like a broken tooth,
And a foot out of joint.

xiii

As one that taketh off a garment in cold weather,
And as vinegar upon nitre,
So is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

xiv

An Epigram

If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat;
And if he be thirsty, give him water to drink:
For thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head,
And the LORD shall reward thee.

xv

The north wind bringeth forth rain:
So doth a backbiting tongue an angry countenance.

xvi

It is better to dwell in the corner of the housetop,
Than with a contentious woman in a wide house.

xvii

As cold waters
To a thirsty soul,
So is good news from a far country.

xviii

As a troubled fountain,
And a corrupted spring,
So is a righteous man that giveth way before the wicked.

xix

It is not good to eat much honey:
So for men to search out their own glory is not glory.

xx

He whose spirit is without restraint
Is like a city that is broken down and hath no wall.

xxi

As snow in summer,
And as rain in harvest,
So honour is not seemly for a fool.

xxii

As the sparrow in her wandering,
As the swallow in her flying,
So the curse that is causeless lighteth not.

xxiii

Fools

A Proverb Cluster

A whip for the horse,
A bridle for the ass,
And a rod for the back of Fools.

Answer not a Fool according to his folly,
Lest thou also be like unto him.
Answer a Fool according to his folly,
Lest he be wise in his own conceit.

*

He that sendeth a message by the hand of a Fool
Cutteth off his own feet,
And drinketh in damage.

*

The legs of the lame hang loose;
So is a parable in the mouth of Fools.

*

As a bag of gems
In a heap of stones,
So is he that giveth honour to a Fool.

*

As a thorn that goeth up into the hand of a drunkard,
So is a parable in the mouth of Fools.

*

As an archer that woundeth all,
So is he that hireth the Fool,
And he that hireth them that pass by.

As a dog that returneth to his vomit,
So is a Fool that repeateth his folly.

*

Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit?
There is more hope of a Fool than of him.

xxiv

The Sluggard

A Proverb Cluster

The Sluggard saith,
There is a lion in the way;
A lion is in the streets.

*

As the door turneth upon its hinges,
So doth the Sluggard upon his bed.

*

The Sluggard burieth his hand in the dish;
It wearieth him to bring it again to his mouth.

*

The Sluggard is wiser in his own conceit
Than seven men that can render a reason.

XXV

Social Pests

A Proverb Cluster

He that passeth by
And vexeth himself with strife belonging not to him,
Is like one that taketh a dog by the ears.

❁

As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death:
So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour,
And saith, Am not I in sport?

❁

For lack of wood the fire goeth out,
And where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth.

❁

As coals are to hot embers,
And wood to fire,
So is a contentious man to inflame strife.

❁

The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels,
And they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.

❁

Fervent lips and a wicked heart
Are like an earthen vessel overlaid with silver dross.

He that hateth dissembleth with his lips,
But he layeth up deceit within him:
When he speaketh fair, believe him not;
For there are seven abominations in his heart:
Though his hatred cover itself with guile,
His wickedness shall be openly shewed before the congregation.

xxvi

Whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein:
And he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him.

xxvii

A lying tongue hateth those whom it hath wounded;
And a flattering mouth worketh ruin.

xxviii

Boast not thyself of tomorrow;
For thou knowest not what a day may bring forth.

xxix

Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth;
A stranger, and not thine own lips.

xxx

A stone is heavy,
And the sand weighty:
But a fool's vexation is heavier than them both.

xxxi

Wrath is cruel,
And anger is outrageous:
But who is able to stand before jealousy?

xxxii

Better is open rebuke
Than love that is hidden.

xxxiii

Faithful are the wounds of a friend:
But the kisses of an enemy are profuse.

xxxiv

The full soul loatheth an honeycomb:
But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet.

xxxv

As a bird that wandereth from her nest,
So is a man that wandereth from his place.

xxxvi

Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart:
So doth the sweetness of a man's friend
That cometh of hearty counsel.

xxxvii

An Epigram

Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not;
And go not to thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity:
Better is a neighbour that is near
Than a brother far off.

xxxviii

My son, be wise, and make my heart glad,
That I may answer him that reproacheth me.

xxxix

A prudent man seeth the evil, and hideth himself:
But the simple pass on, and suffer for it.

xl

Take his garment that is surety for a stranger;
And hold him in pledge that is surety for a strange woman.

xli

He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice,
Rising early in the morning,
It shall be counted a curse to him.

xlii

An Epigram

A continual dropping in a very rainy day
And a contentious woman are alike:
He that would restrain her restraineth the wind,
And his right hand encountereth oil.

xliii

Iron sharpeneth iron:
So a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

xliv

Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof,
And he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured.

xlv

As in water face answereth to face,
So the heart of man to man.

xlvi

Sheol and Abaddon are never satisfied;
And the eyes of man are never satisfied.

xlvii

The fining pot is for silver,
And the furnace for gold:
And a man is tried by his praise.

xlviii

Though thou shouldest bray a fool in a mortar
With a pestle among bruised corn,
Yet will not his foolishness depart from him.

xlix

Folk Song of Good Husbandry

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
And look well to thy herds:
For riches are not for ever;
And doth the crown endure unto all generations?

The hay is carried,
And the tender grass sheweth itself,
And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in.
The lambs are for thy clothing,
And the goats are the price of the field:
And there will be goats' milk enough for thy food,
For the food of thy household;
And maintenance for thy maidens.

l

The wicked flee when no man pursueth,
But the righteous are bold as a lion.

li

For the transgression of a land many are the princes thereof;
But by men of understanding and knowledge the state thereof shall be prolonged.

lii

A needy man that oppresseth the poor
Is like a sweeping rain which leaveth no food.

liii

They that forsake the law praise the wicked:
But such as keep the law contend with them.

liv

Evil men understand not judgement:
But they that seek the LORD understand all things.

lv

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity
Than he that is perverse in his ways, though he be rich.

lvi

Whoso keepeth the law is a wise son:
But he that is a companion of gluttonous men shameth his father.

lvii

He that augmenteth his substance by usury and increase
Gathereth it for him that hath pity on the poor.

lviii

He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law,
Even his prayer is an abomination.

lix

Whoso causeth the upright to go astray in an evil way,
He shall fall himself into his own pit:
But the perfect shall inherit good.

lx

The rich man is wise in his own conceit;
But the poor that hath understanding searcheth him out.

lxi

When the righteous triumph there is great glory:
But when the wicked rise, men hide themselves.

lxii

He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper:
But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy.

lxiii

Happy is the man that feareth alway:
But he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief.

lxiv

As a roaring lion,
And a ranging bear,
So is a wicked ruler over a poor people.

lxv

The prince that lacketh understanding is also a great oppressor:
But he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

lxvi

A man that is laden with the blood of any person
Shall flee unto the pit;
Let no man stay him.

lxvii

Whoso walketh uprightly shall be delivered:
But he that is perverse in his ways shall fall at once.

lxviii

He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread:
But he that followeth after vain persons shall have poverty enough.

lxix

A faithful man shall abound with blessings:
But he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be unpunished.

lxx

To have respect of persons is not good:
Neither that a man should transgress for a piece of bread.

lxxi

He that hath an evil eye hasteth after riches,
And knoweth not that want shall come upon him.

lxxii

He that rebuketh a man shall afterward find more favour
Than he that flattereth with the tongue.

lxxiii

Whoso robbeth his father or his mother,
And saith, It is no transgression,
The same is the companion of a destroyer.

lxxiv

He that is of a greedy spirit stirreth up strife:
But he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat.

lxxv

He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool:
But whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered.

lxxvi

He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack:
But he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse.

lxxvii

When the wicked rise, men hide themselves:
But when they perish, the righteous increase.

lxxviii

He that being often reproved hardeneth his neck
Shall suddenly be broken, and that without remedy.

lxxix

When the righteous are increased, the people rejoice
But when a wicked man beareth rule, the people sigh.

lxxx

Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father:
But he that keepeth company with harlots wasteth his substance.

lxxxi

The king by judgement establisheth the land:
But he that exacteth gifts overthroweth it.

lxxxii

A man that flattereth his neighbour
Spreadeth a net for his steps.

lxxxiii

In the transgression of an evil man there is a snare:
But the righteous doth sing and rejoice.

lxxxiv

The righteous taketh knowledge of the cause of the poor:
The wicked hath not understanding to know it.

lxxxv

Scornful men set a city in a flame:
But wise men turn away wrath.

lxxxvi

If a wise man hath a controversy with a foolish man,
Whether he be angry or laugh, there will be no rest.

lxxxvii

The bloodthirsty hate him that is perfect;
And as for the upright, they seek his life.

lxxxviii

A fool uttereth all his anger:
But a wise man keepeth it back and stilleth it.

lxxxix

If a ruler hearkeneth to falsehood,
All his servants are wicked.

xc

The poor man and the oppressor meet together:
The LORD lighteneth the eyes of them both.

xci

The king that faithfully judgeth the poor,
His throne shall be established for ever.

xcii

The rod and reproof give wisdom:
But a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother.

xciii

When the wicked are increased, transgression increaseth:
But the righteous shall look upon their fall.

xciv

Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest;
Yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul.

xcv

Where there is no vision, the people cast off restraint:
But he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

xcvi

A servant will not be corrected by words:
For though he understand he will not give heed.

xcvii

Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words?
There is more hope of a fool than of him.

xcviii

He that delicately bringeth up his servant from a child
Shall have him become a son at the last.

xcix

An angry man stirreth up strife,
And a wrathful man aboundeth in transgression.

c

A man's pride shall bring him low:
But he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honour.

ci

Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul:
He heareth the adjuration and uttereth nothing.

cii

The fear of man bringeth a snare:
But whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

ciii

Many seek the ruler's favour:
But a man's judgement cometh from the LORD.

civ

An unjust man is an abomination to the righteous:
And he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.

BOOK V

SHORTER COLLECTIONS

THE SAYINGS OF AGUR
THE ORACLE OF LEMUEL'S MOTHER
AN ANONYMOUS ACROSTIC

i–xiii

The Sayings of Agur

i

The Unsearchableness of God

A Sonnet

I have wearied myself, O God,
I have wearied myself, O God,
And am consumed:

For I am more brutish than any man,
And have not the understanding of a man:
And I have not learned wisdom,
Neither have I the knowledge of the Holy One.

Who hath ascended up into heaven, and descended?
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?
Who hath bound the waters in his garment?
Who hath established all the ends of the earth?

What is his name,
And what is his son's name,
If thou knowest?

ii

An Epigram

Every word of God is tried;
He is a shield unto them that trust in him:
Add thou not unto his words,
Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.

iii

The Golden Mean

A Number Sonnet

Two things have I asked of thee;
Deny me not three before I die:

Remove far from me vanity and lies;
Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is needful for me:
Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the LORD?
Or lest I be poor, and steal,
And use profanely the name of my God.

iv

Slander not a servant unto his master,
Lest he curse thee, and thou be held guilty.

v

An Evil Generation

A Sonnet

There is a generation
That curseth their father,
And doth not bless their mother.

There is a generation
That are pure in their own eyes,
And yet are not washed from their filthiness

There is a generation —
Oh how lofty are their eyes!
And their eyelids are lifted up.

There is a generation
Whose teeth are as swords,
And their jaw teeth as knives,
To devour the poor from off the earth,
And the needy from among men.

vi

Things never satisfied

A Number Sonnet

The horseleach hath two daughters, Give, Give,
There are three things that are never satisfied,
Yea, four that say not, Enough:

The Grave;
And the barren Womb;
The Earth that is not satisfied with water;
And the Fire that saith not, Enough.

vii

An Epigram

The eye that mocketh at his father,
And despiseth to obey his mother,
The ravens of the valley shall pick it out,
And the young eagles shall eat it.

viii

Things not to be known

A Number Sonnet

There be three things which are too wonderful for me,
Yea, four which I know not:
The way of an Eagle in the air;
The way of a Serpent upon a rock;
The way of a Ship in the midst of the sea;
And the way of a Man with a Maid.

ix

So is the way of an adulterous woman: —
She eateth, and wipeth her mouth,
And saith, I have done no wickedness.

x

Things not to be borne

A Number Sonnet

For three things the earth doth tremble,
And for four, which it cannot bear:

For a servant when he is king;
And a fool when he is filled with meat;
For an odious woman when she is married;
And an handmaid that is heir to her mistress.

xi

Little and Wise

A Number Sonnet

There be four things which are little upon the earth,
But they are exceeding wise.
The Ants are a people not strong,
Yet they provide their meat in the summer;
The Conies are but a feeble folk,
Yet make they their houses in the rocks;
The Locusts have no king,
Yet go they forth all of them by bands;
The Lizard thou canst seize with thy hands,
Yet is she in kings' palaces.

xii

Things Stately in their Going

A Number Sonnet

There be three things which are stately in their march,
Yea, four which are stately in going:

The Lion,
Which is mightiest among beasts,
And turneth not away for any;
The Greyhound;
The He-goat also;
And the King when his army is with him.

xiii

The Restraining of Wrath

An Epigram

If thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself,
Or if thou hast thought evil,
Lay thine hand upon thy mouth:
For the churning of milk bringeth forth butter,
And the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood;
So the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife.

xiv

The Oracle of Lemuel's Mother

What, my son?
And what, O son of my womb?
And what, O son of my vows?

Give not thy strength unto Women,
Nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings.

It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink Wine,
Nor for princes to say, Where is strong drink?
Lest they drink, and forget the law,
And pervert the judgement of any that is afflicted.

Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,
And wine unto the bitter in soul:
Let him drink, and forget his poverty,
And remember his misery no more.

Open thy mouth for the dumb,
In the cause of all such as are left desolate;
Open thy mouth, judge righteously,
And minister judgement to the poor and needy.

XV

ANONYMOUS

The Virtuous Woman

An Acrostic

A Virtuous Woman who can find?
For her price is far above rubies.

The heart of her husband trusteth in her,
And he shall have no lack of gain.
She doeth him good and not evil
All the days of her life.
She seeketh wool and flax,
And worketh willingly with her hands.
She is like the merchant-ships,
She bringeth her food from afar.
She riseth also while it is yet night,
And giveth meat to her household,
And their task to her maidens.
She considereth a field, and buyeth it:
With the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.

She girdeth her loins with strength,
And maketh strong her arms.
She perceiveth that her merchandise is profitable:
Her lamp goeth not out by night.
She layeth her hands to the distaff,
And her hands hold the spindle.
She spreadeth out her hand to the poor;
Yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid of the snow for her household;
For all her household are clothed with scarlet.
She maketh for herself carpets of tapestry;
Her clothing is fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sitteth among the elders of the land.
She maketh linen garments, and selleth them;
And delivereth girdles unto the merchant.
Strength and dignity are her clothing;
And she laugheth at the time to come.
She openeth her mouth with wisdom;
And the law of kindness is on her tongue.
She looketh well to the ways of her household,
And eateth not the bread of idleness.
Her children rise up, and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praiseth her:
"Many daughters have done virtuously,
But thou excellest them all."

Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain:
But a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands;
And let her works praise her in the gates.

Notes

On the Metrical System of Wisdom Verse

1. It is well understood that the basis of Biblical versification is the Parallelism of clauses. A line of verse is constituted, not by rhyme or number of syllables, but by its running parallel with the clauses of another line. And a similar parallelism determines the larger groupings that correspond to modern 'stanzas.'

Parallelism: Similar and Dissimilar

2. Parallelism between adjacent lines must in the nature of things take two different forms. In Similar Parallelism all the lines are, rhetorically, on an equality.

> *Wisdom crieth aloud in the street;*
> *She uttereth her voice in the broad places;*
> *She crieth in the chief place of concourse . . .*

In Dissimilar Parallelism some lines of a group differentiate themselves from others in their relation to the unity of the whole: this difference of relation is conveyed to the eye by differences of indenting.

> *My son, keep my words,*
> *And lay up my commandments with thee.*
> *Keep my commandments, and live;*
> *And my law, as the apple of thine eye.*
> *Bind them upon thy fingers;*
> *Write them upon the table of thine heart.*

In this passage there is clearly an alternation in the parallelism.

For the lips of a Strange Woman drop honey,
And her mouth is smoother than oil.
But her latter end is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword.
Her feet go down to death;
Her steps take hold on Sheol;
So that she findeth not the level path of life:
Her ways are unstable and she knoweth it not.

Here the first two lines stand by themselves, and the last six go together, in uniting to form the group of eight lines. Similarly, in I. iii the two groups following the (italic) introduction (page 8) are clearly triplets; and again in I. x (page 18) the short lines evidently make a break in the similar parallelism of the context.

3. When groupings of parallel lines are considered, not from the inside only, but also in regard to their outside relations with other groupings, two distinct metrical systems appear in the versification of Wisdom literature. The one results in the 'Strophe and Antistrophe,' the other in 'Stanzas' like those of English verse. All these terms are metrical. But the real distinction between the two systems goes deeper: the one is purely metrical, the other is metrical and something more.

Rhetorical and Metrical Structure

In most languages verse structure depends upon merely musical distinctions — rhyme, syllabic numbers or quantity. But the parallelism of clauses which takes the place of these in Biblical verse is a thing which belongs to rhetoric as well as to music. Hence it is not surprising to find that grammatical and rhetorical relations often coincide with rhythmical distinctions in Biblical

verse. And in the poetry of Biblical Wisdom this becomes the most characteristic feature.

4. We thus get the Rhetoric Antistrophe. Most readers are familiar with the antistrophic structure of Greek lyrics: how the stanzas run in pairs of strophe and antistrophe, each antistrophe the exact rhythmic counterpart of its strophe, however much the rhythm may change between one pair of stanzas and another. Such structure in Greek is purely rhythmic, having no connection with the thought of the passage. And antistrophic structure that is purely rhythmic is found also in Biblical poetry. But in Wisdom verse the structure of strophe and antistrophe is always strengthened by some rhetoric bond: the break between the strophe and its counterpart coinciding with some grammatical relationship of sentences, or rhetorical connection of thought. The opening of I. iv (see page 10) is a strophe of eight lines followed by its antistrophe: the two make the protasis and the apodosis of the same conditional sentence. In I. xiv. (page 23) the strophe holds up the example and the antistrophe makes the appeal; similarly in III. xxxviii (page 122) the strophe surveys a mystery and the antistrophe finds its explanation. Often the relation between the two strophes of a pair is not so easy to formulate as in these cases, but the rhetoric relationship is always perceptible.

The Rhetoric or Antistrophic Structure

5. Antistrophic structure in Greek poetry, though it implies stanzas running in pairs, does not exclude single stanzas independent in rhythm, occurring at the end (epode) or middle (mesode) of a poem. Similarly in Wisdom verse antistrophic poems may have an odd stanza as Introduction or Conclusion. These odd stanzas are included in the rhetoric scheme of the whole. Thus

Introductions and Conclusions

in I. viii (page 15) the strophe and antistrophe (each of six lines) put precepts, and the conclusion (of eight lines) enforces them. In I. x (page 18) the elaborate strophe describes good, its antistrophe evil, while the brief conclusion unites the two ideas in a common image. Sonnet ix of Book I gives an example of introductory verses outside the antistrophic structure.

6. This Antistrophic Structure then belongs to a system which is at once metrical and rhetorical. The other system gives purely metrical 'Stanzas': like those of Modern English poetry these stanzas run in series, not in pairs, and the break between one stanza and the next has nothing beyond form to mark it. Sonnet vii of Book I consists of three similar quatrain stanzas. In V. v a refrain line assists in marking off the stanzas from one another.

The Stanza Structure

7. The Antistrophic Structure and the Stanza Structure can be combined. In I. iii (page 8), besides the Introduction there are three stanzas (triplets), two at the beginning and one at the end, and the intervening lines make up an antistrophic mass of which more will be said below.

The two Structures combined

8. The two structures so described make the staple of Wisdom versification. I go on to describe the varieties of Elaboration by which their effects can be intensified.

Elaborations

To speak first of the Antistrophic Structure. Wherever this extends beyond a single pair of stanzas some elaboration is found; and the modes of such elaboration are three. The first is the Pendulum Structure. In Greek lyrics it is common to find a long series of strophes each followed by its antistrophe, and such a series may be expressed by the formula *aa' bb' cc'* etc. Where this form

Pendulum Structure

appears in Wisdom poetry it is always found in connection with the pendulum effect so common in Biblical literature, by which a discourse swings successively between one and the other of two related topics. A simple example is I. ii (page 7): the first strophe (of a single line) puts temptation, its antistrophe resistance; the next strophe (of nine lines) elaborates the idea of temptation, its antistrophe that of resistance. The structure may be expressed as *1, 1; 9, 9*. A fine example is the middle part of I. iii (page 9) already referred to. Here the thought swings between the obstinate sinners (in the strophes, indented to the right), and the avenging Wisdom (in the antistrophes, indented to the left). The formula would be *5, 5; 1, 1; 1, 1; 4, 4*. — It is to be noted that three poems exhibit a pendulum structure which is not antistrophic; see notes to I. v, I. xiii, III. xlix.

9. A second elaboration of antistrophic structure is Interlacing. Here a strophe is immediately followed by a different strophe, then come the antistrophe to the first and the antistrophe to the second. This form is simply expressed as *ab a'b'*. An example is I. ix (page 16): the introductory lines (in italics) being of course excluded. **Interlacing**

10. An elaboration still more characteristic of Wisdom poetry is Inversion. Here, as in the last case, a strophe is immediately followed by a different strophe, but the antistrophe to the second precedes the antistrophe to the first. The form is thus *ab b'a'*. In I. iv, after the opening mass which has been described under a different head, the eye will catch (page 11) how a strophe of six lines is followed by a strophe of eight lines, then comes the antistrophe of eight lines, and last of all the antistrophe of six lines. Sonnet vi (page 13) is of similar form. And a very elaborate example is **Inversion**

furnished by I. xvi (page 25), of which the first two masses are antistrophic inversions; their formula would be *4, 3; 3, 4; 2a, 2b; 2b, 2a.* In all these cases divisions of thought coincide with distinctions of form.

11. Two modes of elaboration belong to the Stanza Structure. The term Duplication explains itself. Sonnet xi of Book I (after an introduction) is made up of couplet stanzas, but the last is duplicated into a quatrain. A fine example is I. xii (page 20): it has an introduction and conclusion, and four octett stanzas, with the second of them duplicated. It will be seen that this duplication does not merely imply that the second stanza consists of sixteen lines instead of eight, but further that its dissimilar parallelism is one of $4 + 12$, thus exactly duplicating the dissimilar parallelism of the other stanzas, which in each case is $2 + 6$. — [Duplication is sometimes found with antistrophic structure: see note to III. xx.]

Duplication

12. Augmenting is distinct from Duplication, as implying a gradual increase of lines in successive stanzas. There is only one example in *Proverbs* — the great Monologue of Wisdom (I. xvii). Here as the thought crescendoes the stanzas augment: four lines, five lines, six lines, seven lines (see page 33).

Augmenting

13. Two metrical elaborations have yet to be mentioned, which apply equally to the antistrophic and the stanza structure. The first is Variation. Two stanzas will contain the same number of lines, and will show the same proportion beween dissimilar lines: but the dissimilar parallelism will be differently distributed in each. In I. viii (page 15) the strophe and antistrophe have each six lines, in the proportion $4a + 2b$: but the strophe runs as *abaaab*, the antistrophe as *ababaa*. Similarly in the elaborate stanza poem,

Variation

I. xvii, the fourth section (page 30) opens with three octett stanzas of which the dissimilar lines occur at a different place in the first and in the other two: the effect is caught at once by the eye and ear. This Variation is specially characteristic of Wisdom poetry, and illustrates its union of formalism with elasticity.

14. Interruption. — The regularity of a figure may be interrupted by a rhetoric mass that is clearly an effect in itself. The first sonnet of I. xv (page 24) contains a couplet strophe, describing a type of character, and an antistrophe describing its doom; but the sequence of the two is interrupted by the interjection of a septett enumerating symptoms of the character in question. This septett is a bond of connection with the other sonnet of the pair, which is a 'number sonnet' founded on the number seven. — Compare also note to I. xvii.

Interruption

These are the forms, and elaborations of forms, underlying the metres of Wisdom poetry. The notes which follow give technical descriptions of metres wherever these are not simple. It may be permissible to say to the inexperienced reader that the complexity of verse is not to be measured by the complexity of its technical description; often an elaborate formula is necessary to state accurately what when grasped presents itself to the mind as simple. And the metres of Wisdom poetry are delightful in their combination of intricacy with freedom.

BOOK I

i. For the structure of this and other epigrams, see Introduction, page xxii.

ii. Pendulum structure (*1, 1; 9, 9*): temptation (left) and resistance (right).

iii. Introduction and Monologue, combining antistrophic and stanza structure. Three triplet stanzas (at beginning and end) contain appeal, while the intervening antistrophic mass is made up of threatening. This last has the pendulum structure (*5, 5; 1, 1; 1, 1; 4, 4*), swaying between the obstinate sinners (right lines) and the retributive wisdom (left lines).

iv. Antistrophic structure in two rhetoric masses. The first, a simple strophe and antistrophe (*8, 8*), contains the general position that Wisdom delivers from evil; the second mass is an antistrophic inversion (*6, 8; 8, 6*) enlarging upon this theme.

v. Free pendulum structure (*i.e.* not exactly antistrophic): the left hand lines emphasize the commandments, the right hand lines the reward. Compare I. xiii and IV. xlix.

vi. Antistrophic inversion (*4, 6; 6, 4*). The unity of the sonnet is the conception of Wisdom as a prize. The middle strophe and antistrophe describe the richness of this prize; the opening strophe makes 'chastening' the cost at which it is obtained by the individual from the Lord; and the corresponding antistrophe (at the end) explains the reason for this costliness — wisdom was the instrument by which the whole universe was created.

vii. Stanza structure : three similar quatrains.

viii. Strophe and antistrophe, precepts; conclusion, their sanction. The strophe and antistrophe exhibit 'variation' (see above, page 168).

ix. Introduction, and antistrophic interlacing (*a b a′b′*). The short lines make a theme, characterising the first strophe and its antistrophe (though, by 'variation,' appearing at different places in the two stanzas). The other strophe and antistrophe emphasize the theme.

x. Strophe, the way of wisdom; antistrophe, the path of the

wicked; conclusion, union of the two in a common image. The emphatic short lines appear, by 'variation,' at different parts of the strophe and antistrophe.

xi. Introduction and couplet stanzas, the last duplicated.

xii. Stanza structure. Introduction and conclusion, quatrains; body of the sonnet, four octett stanzas, of which the second is duplicated. (See above, page 168.)

xiii. Free pendulum structure (*i.e.* not antistrophic): left hand lines describe the negotiation with the neighbour, right hand lines put the idea of suretiship as a snare. Compare I. v and IV. xlix.

xiv. Strophe, the example; antistrophe, the appeal.

xv. A pair of sonnets on the same theme, a further bond being the figure seven common to both. The first is an example of 'interruption' (see above, page 169). The second is a number sonnet. (Introduction, page xxiii).

xvi. A combination of antistrophic and stanza structure. Two masses of antistrophic inversion (*4, 3; 3, 4* and *2a, 2b; 2b, 2a*) denounce adultery in general terms. Then three similar quatrain stanzas compare this with other forms of sin. The thought is that dishonesty, though it must be severely punished, is at least an intelligible temptation, but adultery is the act of a man void of understanding.

xvii. This and the following are the most elaborate and splendid poems in all Wisdom literature; and they illustrate in the highest form the stanza structure and the antistrophic structure respectively.

A characteristic feature of the present poem is the device of Interruption described above (page 169). The regular flow of stanzas is broken at critical points by single couplets; this has the effect of musical rhythm interrupted by recitative. Or, from

section 5, these couplets might be compared to words given out by the voice of the priest, which are caught up and carried on by the choir. Again, in the picture of temptation, which makes the second section, the actual speech of the temptress is an irregular mass outside the stanza structure (compare the *apolelumena* of Greek lyrics), and this has a fine effect.

The whole falls into seven sections. 1. General introduction, in a ten line stanza of alternate parallelism; a similar stanza appears at the close. 2. The picture of temptation, in sextetts (varied), with effects of interruption as described in the last paragraph. 3. An octett of alternate lines, putting the general moral. 4. The octett, but with varied parallelism, extends into the first part of Wisdom's monologue. 5. But where Wisdom begins to describe the attractions she has to offer, the stanzas lighten into quatrains (broken, as already said, by recitative). 6. As the climax of creative wisdom is reached the metre catches the crescendo, and the stanzas successively augment from 4 to 5, 6, and 7 lines. 7. The poem settles down to a calm conclusion in the metre of its introduction.

xviii. This is a supreme example of antistrophic structure. It is an antistrophic inversion (*a b b a*), of which each strophe is a sonnet complete in itself. I have thus described it as a Sonnet of Sonnets. The opening strophe, and its antistrophe at the end, are complete sonnets, in which *Wisdom* and *Folly* are heard to *proclaim their blessings* under the common image of hospitality. Between these come two other short sonnets, antistrophic to one another, the one dealing with *proclaiming* (or reproving), the other with *blessings*, in application to *wise* and *fools*. [These short sonnets might also be classed as epigrams, in which case the germ couplet of each (see Introduction page xxii) would be the lines indented to the extreme right.]

Not only is the form of the whole based upon antistrophic inversion, but the middle sonnets repeat the figure, each having two triplets inverted.

BOOK II

This book contains 375 unit proverbs entirely disconnected. With a very few exceptions they are couplets of similar parallelism.

ccxxxii, cclxxvi, ccxcii, cccxxxiv.

Many critics regard cclxxvi as corrupt. Apparently the only reason for this view is the belief that all the proverbs of Book II are independent couplets. But ccxxxii, ccxcii and cccxxxiv are examples of proverbs in this second book which can best be arranged as triplets; moreover the sense of cclxxvi is perfect, and makes a valuable proverb. The difference between couplet and triplet is very slight, and the proverbs enumerated in the next paragraph hover on the boundary between the two forms.

xxvi, liv, ccxx, cclxxxix, ccxcv, ccxcix, cccviii, cccx, cccxiii, cccxxxii, ccclxxii.

I incline to arrange all these as triplets, though in every case it is clear that two of the lines might be made one. They seem to constitute a special gnomic figure, which appears repeatedly in Book IV as a clear triplet (compare iv, v, xiii, xvii, xviii, xxi, xxii, etc.).

BOOK III

The preface seems clearly to constitute this third collection a Wisdom Epistle, entrusted to a messenger to convey to distant correspondents. Solomon is traditionally said to have carried

on such correspondence in riddles and dark sayings with Hiram of Tyre and with the Queen of Sheba.

vi, vii, viii, xv, xix, xxviii, xxix, xxxiv.

For the metre of these and other Epigrams the reader is referred to the Introduction, page xxii.

xx. The structure of this Riddle Sonnet is antistrophic, with inversion and duplication (*6, 2; 4, 12*). The first strophe (of six) puts the question, the symptoms of intoxication, and the second strophe (of two) gives the answering cause — wine. Then, in reversed order, an antistrophe on wine is duplicated into a quatrain, and the antistrophe on the symptoms of the malady into a stanza of 12 lines (or 6 couplets).

xxxviii. Antistrophic structure: strophe, the mystery; antistrophe, the explanation. This sonnet and I. xiv are constructed out of the same epigram germ (last five lines).

BOOK IV

Title. It is best to understand the term 'Proverbs of Solomon' here, and in the title to Book II, and in the General Title page, to be the description of a kind of proverb: viz. the unit proverb (couplet or triplet), and the simpler epigrams, as distinguished from the sonnets and elaborate poems.

Comparing this book with Book II, we find the former to be an anthology from various sources of which the collection constituting Book II is one: a large number of proverbs are common to the two collections. In this later anthology there is an approach to arrangement, in the 'Proverb Cluster,' by which

separate aphorisms (some of them epigrams) are gathered together round a common theme. Compare i, xxiii, xxiv, xxv.

xlix. This poem stands out by itself from all the rest of Wisdom literature. The first four lines would make an ordinary epigram; but the rest is of an entirely different character. It is best to classify the whole, or at all events the latter part, as a Folk Song, embodying the traditional principles of primitive farming. Such a song is the prototype, not so much of literary 'Georgics,' as of practical verse manuals like honest Thomas Tusser's *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*. This accounts for its appearance in a collection of Wisdom literature. — Considered as a single poem it has the free pendulum structure (compare I. v and xiii), swaying between farming operations (left lines) and the profits of these (right lines).

BOOK V

This portion of *Proverbs*, like the other portions, I have arranged as a collection of sayings. The old idea that the contents of Book I constituted a continuous poem has been abandoned by most authorities, but some commentators of great weight still look upon the sayings of Agur as constituting a unity, or hold that some of them are rebukes by orthodox scribes to the sceptical tone of Agur's own words. In my own opinion the whole of Book V reads quite naturally as an anthology of disconnected sayings; and the burden of proof must lie with those who would dissociate this portion of *Proverbs* from the miscellaneous character of all the rest.

i. For the spirit of this poem, see Introduction (page 15). In metre it is an antistrophic inversion (*3, 4; 4, 3*). If it seems

straining to divide the final lines as I have done, I would support my arrangement by Psalm viii. 4.

iii, vi, viii, x, xi, xii. For the metre of these 'Number Sonnets' see Introduction, page xxiii.

iii. The Revised Version (and also the Authorised) read: —

Two things have I asked of thee;
Deny me them *not before I die.*

Though there is no textual authority for the change, I have not hesitated to alter 'them' into 'three.' Without this the sonnet would announce two things in its text, and enumerate three in its explanation. The form —

Two things have I asked of thee;
Deny me not three before I die.

brings the whole into conformity with the form of other Number Sonnets; compare vi, viii, x, xii.

v. A Sonnet in stanza structure, with refrain. The last stanza is duplicated: compare I. xi.

ix. This triplet proverb might also be arranged as an epigram: —

So is the way of an adulterous woman:
She eateth,
And wipeth her mouth,
And saith, I have done no wickedness.

xiv. The title in R. V. xxxi. 1 seems to constitute what follows (2–9) as a single composition: an 'Oracle' for King Lemuel composed by his mother. In form it consists of (1) an introductory exclamation (three lines), (2) a unit proverb,

(3) an epigram. The last is the most elaborate in structure of all Biblical epigrams. The germ couplet (see Introduction, page xxii) is made up of the first and third lines; each of these is buttressed by an additional line; then follow two quatrains, the first supporting the first line of the germ proverb, the second supporting the other line of the germ proverb.

XV. In the original this is an acrostic: the 22 verses begin with the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

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